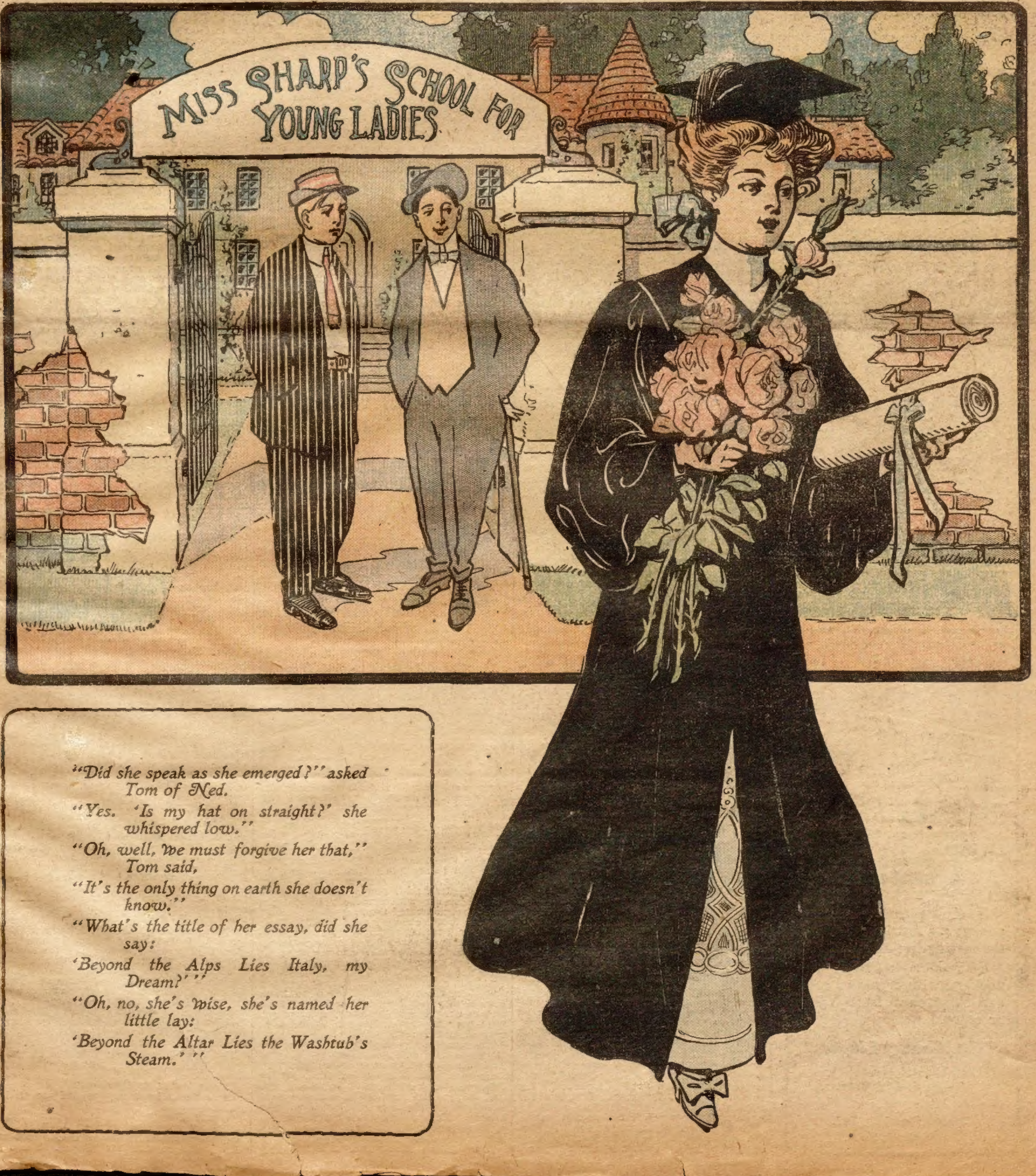
READ "A WOMAN SCORNED," A THRILLING LEDGER MANCE, NEXT WEEK.
"THE BOY WITH MUSCLE; OR, A 3,000-MILE MOTOR AR RACE," SHORTLY.

Wm J Benners
4720 Chester ave
6Jan12

THE CHICAGO LEDGER

VOL. XXXVIII. NO. 24. CHICAGO, ILL., SATURDAY, JUNE 11, 1910. SINGLE COPIES 5 CENTS.

THE SWEET GIRL GRADUATE


MISS SHARP'S SCHOOL FOR YOUNG LADIES

"Did she speak as she emerged?" asked
Tom of Ned.
"Yes. 'Is my hat on straight?' she
whispered low."
"Oh, well, we must forgive her that,"
Tom said,
"It's the only thing on earth she doesn't
know."
"What's the title of her essay, did she
say:
'Beyond the Alps Lies Italy, my
Dream?'"
"Oh, no, she's wise, she's named her
little lay:
'Beyond the Altar Lies the Washtub's
Steam.'"

Lords of the Ax;

Or, WHO WAS NAPOLEON KNIGHT?

By WILLIAM H. MANNING

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Begun in No. 23, June 4. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER V.

MYSTERIOUS SHERWOOD.

THE next ten days saw changes at Ben Nord, and Napoleon Knight went from obscurity to position second only to the master of the claim. He had taken MacBree's fancy and advertised himself when he refused Nate Wolfe's offer. Then came his talk about driving the Liberty men out of business. Ninety-nine men in a hundred might have talked to MacBree along this line and made no impression, for he had himself given years of planning to the same end, and Napoleon had been there too short a time to know local conditions; but the daring of the man, his earnestness, and that unnamable something that sometimes disposes one man to believe in another—all these things operated with Fergus in Knight's favor.

Ostensibly engaged as a cook, and, really, engaged because Spence & Kalet's teams had been purchased and MacBree would not throw anybody out of work, Napoleon did very little cooking. MacBree put him into the woods. He saw him use ax, cant-hook, saw, swamp-hook and tongs; saw him labor as swamper, sawyer, skidder and scaler; saw him at travoys, skidways and banking-ground—for there was always a little doing at Ben Nord even in the off-season—and found him proficient.

Then came the climax.

An early spring freshet had left sundry logs high up the mountain, and they had been skidded for a keep-over, but, shortly after Napoleon arrived, there was a great rain, the logs floated, and one of two things was sure to happen—they would go their proper way through Little River, or, if diverted from their course, plunge into Bottomless Canyon and be lost forever in that inacessible chasm. Matters did not go well; the foremost logs jammed, and the canyon yawned for the remainder, but Pete Rayner, the foreman, and other men risked their lives and broke the jam, saving some thousand dollars to MacBree.

Napoleon was conspicuous in this feat. It is to be doubted that he did more than a dozen others, but MacBree thought he did, and that led to other things. Rayner was working his last days at Ben Nord, for he was going East to retire from his present occupations, and Napoleon Knight was promptly appointed foreman in his place.

This was not remarkable. MacBree had his notions as to how men should be managed, and, when engaging a new foreman, always hired an outsider if possible, believing that a stranger could get better work out of the gang than one who had been their associate previously. Thus, there was nothing unusual in the swift rise of the new foreman, except that he had no references. He had spoken of logging in the North, and MacBree was not the man to send hundreds of miles for recommendations.

If he had insisted upon having such testimonials, his employe could not have furnished them.

Napoleon knew nothing of his past—not even his real name.

His remotest recollection was of being in a wagon that was going somewhere, with two men on the seat; but that period was vague, and he did not know who the men were, nor how the journey ended. His first clear remembrance was of a sick bed, a wounded head, pain, nursing, faithful care and recovery. He found himself in a small settlement called Harker's, in good condition physically, but with his past a total blank. His nurses could not enlighten him as to his identity. He had been found, one morning, on their doorstep, exactly like an abandoned child. That, and the further fact that they had taken him in and brought him through his illness, was all they knew.

Regaining strength, he hired out to Spence & Kalet as driver, went south to Nettleton City with the outfit, and then north, again, to the base of Scarlock, where the wagons were to deliver goods to MacBree and the Liberty claim. How his term with the teamsters ended has been seen.

He had lost his identity, his past, his history, his name; and it was all due to the wound that still showed red under the thick hair of his head.

Afflicted as he was, certain things were left to him as mutilated lights on his past.

He knew he had seen experience as lumber-jack, herder, and cook. He recalled, too, that there had been two men, apparently friends, who bore the nicknames of "Slap" and "Shrug," and that he was one of the two, but he could not tell which. The name, Napoleon, too, floated persistently in his mind—so persistently that he believed it must be his. No surname shaped itself into the haze, so he adopted that of Knight, because his past was unknown—shrouded in night.

Although he did not know who the men were who carried him in the wagon, when he was wounded, he had one recollection connected with them—a red crescent! Connected with that journey in some manner—he did not know how—was a red crescent, but what it had been, and with what it had to do he could not guess. It was a matter of words, rather than of form; he could not see it, now, nor place it even remotely, yet he felt that there had been a thing of that sort when he rode. He felt this much as blind man feels that stars are in the sky, yet his grasp on the situation was weaker than that of the blind man.

When he arrived at Scarlock it had meant no more to him, as far as he could see, than if he had arrived at any one of a thousand other places. Scarlock, Ben Nord, Liberty, MacBree and Sherwood were words that, to the best of his knowledge, he had never heard until he was with Spence & Kalet's outfit.

This was the new foreman of Ben Nord, and as he talked with Fergus and schemed to annihilate the Liberty property, he did not dream that when "Slap" and "Shrug" were together one of them had abundant reason for wishing to protect, not destroy, Liberty claim.

Fate had placed him on Scarlock blindfolded, and some imp of perversity had innoculated him with a desire to ruin the property north of MacBree's,

Two days after his appointment as foreman he was hailed by MacBree while he was crossing the grounds before the so-called mansion of the owner.

"Come ride with Sandy and me!" added Fergus. "We are going over to Liberty. Asa Sherwood has come!"

"Oh!" said Napoleon, indifferently; then he suddenly brightened and added: "What's he like?"

"I don't know, for I have not seen him. Word came through some of the Liberty herders."

"I shall be glad to go; I want to see this man whom we've got to fight against."

Ten minutes later the three horsemen were under way, and in half an hour they arrived at the rival establishment. It was practically Ben Nord over again—there was a great house, with smaller buildings of all kinds, and an air of neatness and thrift over all. It looked fit for the home of a millionaire business man.

They had barely reached the collection of houses when Nate Wolfe appeared. Napoleon had, of course, seen him before, but he now looked with more curiosity. Wolfe was young, rather good-looking, trim, bright, and shrewd of appearance. With him as foreman the Liberty's owner had a capable backer, and the Ben Nord outfit a resourceful adversary.

It was a common saying on Scarlock that when the rival factions were not at war they were at peace, and Wolfe greeted the callers with a degree of amiability.

"Fine day!" he added, plucking a spear of grass and beginning to chew upon it.

"Bonny!" agreed Fergus. "How's your bunch?"

"Great!"

"And how is Sherwood?"

"Lively as a cricket!"

"Good! I've come to see him."

Wolfe seemed suddenly to grow uneasy.

"Oh, have you?" he replied slowly.

"Yes. Just tell him, will you, that I am here?"

"Why, yes," said the foreman, looking at the ground in an odd fashion. "I'll tell him, of course, but—well, the fact is, he can't see anybody at present."

"Can't—see—anybody?" repeated MacBree, mystified.

"No! It's like this: He's been sick; had a hard pull with fever, and it has left his eyes so weak that he has to keep shut up in his room. See those drawn shades? He is there, in darkness. Got to be careful or he will lose his eyesight permanently."

"Sorry for him! Well, then I'll go into his room and talk. We need to have a confab right away aboot the things that concern us both, so we can live together as neighbors should——"

"That's a good idea, Fergus," interrupted Wolfe. "I'll talk it over with you. What is it—logs, cattle, sheep or crops?"

"Maybe half a dozen o' one and six o' the other!" returned MacBree drily. "You are all right, Nate, but I'm looking for the boss of Liberty, just now. Tell him I'm here, will ye?"

"Sorry!" answered the foreman coolly, "but Asa Sherwood can't see you. Besides his weak eyes, he's weak from fever. Can't expect a sick man to do business, can you?"

"Seems he was able to travel here."

"At a pinch, yes."

"If I can't go in, mebbe he will shout out of the window."

"His weak eyes——"

"Is his tongue weak, too?" snapped MacBree.

"Just now, yes! It's really too bad, Fergus, but he can do no business at this present writing, so to speak."

"A maist peetiful case!" quoth the visitor, with sarcasm. "I never kenned the like before. Puir young mon! I suppose it wadna be possible for me to peek into the keyhole an' make sure he is being properly cared for in his sorrowful plight?"

"We have to keep him very quiet," explained Wolfe, apparently unconscious of MacBree's sarcasm. "Be patient a few days and he will ride over and see you."

Fergus tightened his rein preparatory to going.

"Weel," he said, "the young mon will be welcome, unless I have a toothache then. It might happen, an' we of Scarlock are deelicate plants, ye know." He turned his horse, and then, looking back over his shoulder, added: "If ye think it will not harm his weak eyes, say to the puir, afflicted mon that I shall take no great comfort until I know he is better."

"All right, Fergus!" cried Wolfe cheerily. "I'll tell him of your good wishes."

The lord of the ax jogged along homeward with Napoleon and Sandy by his side. He said nothing for some time, and they waited. Finally the big man began to shake as if with profound emotion. From silent mirth he went to loud laughter, and then, curbing himself, chuckled in great glee.

"There will be a change on Scarlock!" he exclaimed. "Trees will be felled with writing-pens, logs will be travoyed with sewing-silk, and river-jams broke with toothpicks! This young Sherwood—this little boy of twenty-five or thirty years—this chap who can't talk because his eyes are weak—aha! he will show us how to clear Scarlock of logs! Mon, Napoleon, did ye hear Nate Wolfe say whether his maister wore pants or skirts?"

With this Fergus laughed again, and his deep roar filled the immediate space full of sound.

Young Sandy, looking from one to the other of his companions, saw that Napoleon Knight was as sober as MacBree was hilarious.

"What's up?" demanded the foreman suddenly.

"Eh?"

"Why does Sherwood hide in his room like a rat in its hole? Weak eyes—sickness? Well, I know it's a painful fact that men can be sick, now and then, but I'll bet a year's wages there is something wrong at Liberty claim. Nate Wolfe has something to conceal! Now, why does Sherwood shut himself up in his room?"

The three riders had crossed the line between the two claims and were on Ben Nord property. Fergus abruptly left off laughing, grew grave, reined in his horse and turned squarely toward his foreman.

"Mon," he asked, "what's in your noddle?"

"Suspicion—nothing more!" Knight responded. "If there is a trick I don't see even the edges of it clearly, but I believe that Nate Wolfe was playing a part, and—why does Sherwood shut himself up in a dark room?"

"Can it be?" asked Sandy, "that he has smallpox, and that they want to keep it secret?"

"There may be something in that," MacBree agreed. "You see, Napoleon, we had an epidemic here, a few years ago, and both outfits lost men by it. There was a regular reign of terror, and we dread the disease as we do the devil himself."

"The idea is worth keeping in mind," said Napoleon, as if with unwilling frankness, "but I have another idea. Mischief is brewing against Ben Nord! Sherwood, newly come into his property, is full of malevolent activity, and he has planned some stroke against us. It may be a legal dodge, or even open war. Anyhow, it's something for us to fear, watch out for, and fight against! That's my theory!"

"If that's the game," cried MacBree, "they will find we can fight, too!"

"Fight!" repeated Napoleon, shutting his teeth after the word and then opening them with a jerk; "if they want that they will get their fill! I am foreman of Ben Nord, and if those fellows try war on us they will find us in the game. With your permission, we will drop slow methods and strike swift and sure. Let the Liberty outfit look out for themselves!"

CHAPTER VI.

A BLOW AGAINST BEN NORD.

When the riders reached the house MacBree and Sandy left Napoleon to care for the horses. The foreman looked back, shortly, after, and, seeing father and son on the piazza with somebody he did not recognize, addressed the barn-boss.

"Who is the stranger with MacBree?"

"He told me his name was James Anderson. Dropped around just after you rode away and has been waiting to see MacBree. Don't you know him? He was asking questions about you."

"About me? What questions?"

"Oh! nothing much. Wanted to know your name, how long you had been here, and so on. He said he saw you when you were over by the sheep-run. I reckon he only wanted to make talk."

The barn-boss walked away, but he left Napoleon with questions in his mind. Who was this man who was curious about him? Napoleon himself grew curious. Of all things he aspired to meet somebody who had known him previously, and one from whom he could learn his locked-up past history. Half an hour later the foreman met Anderson, who was walking with MacBree. The latter introduced them.

"I am glad to know you," said Anderson cordially. "I understand you are foreman here. Mr. MacBree and you have a good deal of business on your hands."

Napoleon made no answer, and then MacBree explained:

"Mr. Anderson is a gentleman tourist, traveling this district on foot to see the country fully. I have prevailed on him to stay with us a few weeks."

"He will like it," responded the foreman. "Which way do you come from, Mr. Anderson?"

"From the South," the tourist replied.

"Do you live down that way?"

"Well, you see, I have been traveling. Just looking the country over, and I happened this way. I like nature, wild places, unique homes, and so on. Ben Nord is great, great!"

He waxed enthusiastic, and said more to the same effect. When he had finished, Napoleon again tried to learn whence he hailed, but with no better results than before. Anderson was fluent of speech on all subjects except himself, but he stopped short at that point. When he went on with MacBree he left Knight in a new frame of mind.

"Who is he, and what's he here for? Why was he asking questions about me?"

Napoleon dwelt upon these problems for some time, and with suspicion rising in his mind. He was not so anxious as before to find a man who could tell all about himself. Why was Anderson so secretive? Why was he so inquisitive? What did he care about MacBree's foreman?

In dwelling upon his past it had never before occurred to Knight that the aforesaid past might have black threads running through its warp and woof, but the possibility was now presented. Had he done some deed that would interest the law? Was Anderson there to investigate? It was an unpleasant idea, and once it was afoot Knight could not forget it.

He surveyed the man closely. He was of about his own age, height and build, and his manner was that of a gentleman, but his suit was past the bloom of youth, and he did not look over-prosperous. Clothes counted for so little when a man had business in hand, and Napoleon gave scant attention to such details. His impression was that he had never seen Anderson, but he could not rely upon it. Neither could he guess why the newcomer had asked questions concerning him.

"I'll watch him!" Napoleon decided. "If he really knows me I would like to have him tell me whether I am 'Slap' or 'Shrug,' but it isn't safe to ask. Those men—I wonder if either 'Slap' or 'Shrug' ever did a lawless act? Yes, and I wonder what this Anderson has got in his mind?"

Five days passed. Anderson remained at Ben Nord and made himself at home. If he asked any more questions concerning the foreman, the latter did not hear of it. He was polite and amiable when with Knight, and the only thing that grew freshly suspicious was his course as to himself. Finding that he was among people who wanted to know all about each other, the gentleman tourist one day stated that his home was in El Paso, Texas. It was a rash statement. Jack Rantly, one of the herders, promptly announced that he had himself lived in El Pasco, and, questioning Anderson as to local affairs there, developed the fact that the tourist knew nothing about the town.

Whereat Anderson was briefly confused, though he managed to laugh his way out of the dilemma fairly well by confessing that he was a sort of tramp, and really had no place to claim as home. Possibly this satisfied some of his hearers, but Knight had fresh fuel for his suspicions.

The five days had been a busy time with Napoleon. He had been all over Ben Nord; had seen the logging-grounds, and directed work among the flocks and herds and in the fields of grain, showing ready skill in overseeing all operations. This was labor; he had some relaxation. He had been admitted to free association with MacBree's family; had often seen Sibyl and Janie, which was agreeable, and, also, had seen Carlos Blakell, the guest, which was not so pleasant.

Napoleon was much in the saddle, going far and wide. Sometimes he had Fergus for a companion, and, more often, Sandy, and then, sometimes, Sibyl and Blakell kept him company. Blakell was civil, but Napoleon did not like him and wondered that Sibyl could tolerate him.

The foreman was not jealous of the guest, for the very good reason that he was not himself interested in Sibyl. She was a fair sight for the eye of man; she rode like a bird on wing, and she was bright, cheery and unaffected in conversation; but Knight was so bound up in other matters that he gave her little more thought than he bestowed upon her gallant horse.

During this period there was, as far as they knew, no change at the rival claim. Employes there gossiped, and they talked with Ben Nord men; and from this it was known that nobody had seen more of the weak-eyed man at Liberty. The newly-come heir still kept his room, and the room was dark day and night.

The only noticeable change consequent to the arrival in that quarter, according to the view of Ben Nord men, was an increased activity from base to summit of Liberty claim. Wonder continued, and Napoleon still predicted mischief brooding.

Directly after dinner, the fifth day, Knight took two men and rode south to attend to the cattle in an isolated valley. Two hours later, the work being done, he was again nearing home when something unusual met his attention.

There was a certain sorrel horse at Ben Nord that was never ridden by anybody save Fergus MacBree—a horse that, while not coarsely built, stood so high that it seemed a fit mate for the big man. Now, Napoleon saw this horse coming down the mountain, but not at speed, and not with the lord of the ax sitting in the saddle. The animal bore a burden, but it was recumbent, and the progress of the horse was slow, and four men walked by its side and seemed to hold something upon it.

Struck with a sudden fear the foreman spurred his own beast and swept quickly foreward.

"What is it?" he demanded.

"MacBree is hurt, sir," replied one of the men.

"Hurt? How?"

"He fell from his horse, and——"

Napoleon heard no more. He had ridden closer, and he saw for himself. The big

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man lay passive and white, his eyes shut, and it was clear that he was unconscious. His injury did not show, but certain of its effect did. He was in place upon his steed because he was held on by his men.

Their thoughts had been chiefly of their boss, but Dan Garley suddenly aroused and spoke quickly.

"Say, there is blazes let loose on Third Acre!"

Knight at once became the keen business man.

"What's up?" he asked.

"The Liberty men are turning the water of Eagle Pond away from Ben Nord!"

"What?"

"Fact! And that's why Fergus lays here as he is. When he found it out he started pell-mell to get a gang from here to stop it, and he rode his sorrel so reckless that he pitched off and fell on his head!"

"It's a bad hurt!" added a second man. "I know something about such things—this is no common stun; it will surprise me if he hasn't got concussion of the brain!"

"Carry him into the house and notify his daughters!" ordered Knight swiftly. "Let everything possible be done for him. Sloper?"

"Yes, sir?"

"Ride like mad to Long Valley and bring every man you find there. Clark, get out rifles, revolvers and knives! We are going to Third Acre!"

MacBree was carried on toward the house, but Napoleon ignored him. The foreman was moving about with celerity which, however, had no sign of nervousness, and while he worked he took quick, frequent glances up the mountain.

Everybody knew what Third Acre was. The fence between Ben Nord and Liberty ran as far as the fields for grazing and cultivation. After that there was nothing of the sort. Two years before old Zeke Dalton had gone with his men and blazed a line that suited him. It did not suit MacBree, who had blazed another; and these two artificial lines grew to be far apart before the summit was reached. Probably each boss had wilfully blazed over upon his neighbor's land. As a result of the so-called lines, there was a V-shaped area of timber in dispute, and it was worth thousands of dollars. Extensive though it was, it was known as Third Acre, as neither boss could prove property.

As a rule Scarlock was well watered, but certain grazing land was dependent for full value on water that had been scientifically led down from Eagle Pond, a part to each owner. Eagle Pond was on Third Acre, and the latest news indicated that the Liberty men intended to steal the flow.

Napoleon Knight did not intend that they should.

He was successfully rallying his scattered men when there was a rush to the spot, a sweep of feminine garments, and Sibyl stood before him. Her great eyes burned like twin fires amidst the unusual pallor of her face. She looked at the foreman and her heart seemed to be in the regard.

"You know!" she cried tensely. "Father is hurt—badly hurt! We think it is a fracture of the skull! And the men of that wretch, Sherwood, are trying to steal our flow from Eagle Pond——"

"They won't succeed!" grimly, coolly interrupted Knight.

"If father was there he would order them flogged and beaten——"

"I shall order them shot!" curtly explained Napoleon.

"You will go—you will save the waters of Eagle Pond——"

"Every gallon of it!" asserted the foreman, clapping his hands.

Sibyl caught his arm impulsively.

"My duty lies with my father," she pursued. "From this time I shall be found at his bedside; I shall not leave him if Ben Nord goes to ruin. My father is first with me! But, Mr. Knight, Ben Nord is dear to him, and it will break his heart if he finds things have gone wrong when he recovers. Do you realize what depends upon you? Sandy is a boy. Sir, you have this hour taken Ben Nord—its safety, its success, its very existence upon your shoulders. There is nobody else—all depends upon you! Ben Nord is in your hands. It is for you to save it, if it be saved. You stand alone as the brains of the outfit!"

Napoleon had listened with a calm, unreadable expression. Now he reached out and took her hand composedly, gave it a business-like hold and dropped it.

"Ben Nord will be saved!" he replied steadily.

"The Liberty men will struggle hard if they hear that father is stricken. Beware of their open attacks, and beware of their secret schemes!"

Napoleon looked toward the summit of Scarlock. Upt that way were miles of trees, the wealth of the two claims. All through the years of rivalry it had been known to everybody that a torch applied to the dry underbrush when the wind was right, would ruin the claim that was put to the brand, though nobody had yet been found relentless enough to take that desperate step.

The new foreman thought of the waiting opportunity.

"If they want war," he said, still unmoved outwardly, but with scowling brows, "they will find us in the game, too. I shall advise them to leave us alone—unless they want Liberty claim reduced to blackened sticks!"

"Hold your hand if you can, but if it comes to that—well—and, Mr. Knight, I have no more to say. My place is by my father!"

"Mine is at Eagle Pond!" he responded.

She hurried indoors. He saw his men coming from all directions. He got them quickly in motion and they surged up the mountain, each man bristling with weapons.

A few weeks before two travelers journeyed on the Haroback trail, both asserting their eagerness that Liberty claim should prosper. Now, one of the two—'Slap' or 'Shrug'—went at the head of the men of Ben Nord and meditated the destruction of Liberty claim.

Fate, the master-gamester, had a heavy hand on Napoleon Knight!

CHAPTER VII.

NAPOLEON FACES THE FOE.

A line of men went snake-like up Scarlock, twisting between big trees, and now and then circling obstructing cliffs, but, as a rule, combating only with the sharp rise of the mountain. Their progress was as rapid as circumstances would allow, and it told on breath and strength, but they held doggedly to their task and fought the acclivity until victory was close at hand.

They were Napoleon Knight and his war-party, with Dan Garley, Jack Rantley, Henri Vascour and others as conspicuous goers at the heels of the foreman.

They reached Third Acre, passed silently through the towering trees and suddenly came to the shore of Eagle Pond. And there they saw a party of men who were laboring with picks and spades to open a channel in the natural retaining wall.

"Dick Ellett and Manuel Quesolda are there!" muttered Rantley, naming men well known as leading spirits on Liberty claim.

Napoleon Knight strode forward with long, light steps. Taken entirely by surprise, the rival party stopped work and looked with blank uncertainty.

"Digging for gold?" asked Knight, with sarcasm.

"Well, no!" answered Ellett hesitatingly.

"Going to tunnel the mountain?"

"Not exactly."

"I suppose it is only for exercise?"

Dick Ellett leaned on his spade and hunted for words. It had been supposed that they could do their work unseen, and he was not yet free from the force of the surprise that had followed the interruption.

"Did Fergus MacBree hire you to do this job?" pursued Napoleon.

The light of anger flashed to Ellett's eyes.

"What's MacBree got to do with this land?" he demanded.

"Not a thing, except that he owns it!" retorted Knight.

"Wrong—this is Asa Sherwood's claim; this is Liberty land!" and Dick Ellett drove his spade into earth as if to anchor himself there.

"This is Third Acre," composedly answered the Ben Nord foreman. "It is MacBree's property. Wait—wait a bit, Mr. Ellett! You and I are busy men, so why should we argue that point? Do we get paid for it—are we lawyers? Not any! The fact is that this is disputed territory. Let's admit that and attend to our own business. Here is Eagle Pond. Its flow waters certain territory of both lumber barons. Now, why are you opening a gap that will give all to Sherwood and rob MacBree of his share?"

"MacBree has no legal share!" declared Dick. "This is Sherwood's land!"

"Oh! come, now, don't be a fool!" advised Knight. "We can't try titles, for we are only hired men. You know how things have been—both owners have had the flow. Drop argument, if you please. Yes, and drop it if you don't please! Do Sherwood and Nate Wolfe know what you are here for?"

"Sherwood is shut up in his room with weak eyes," replied Dick. "I have never seen him. As for Wolfe, it was he who sent us here, and we are doing what he ordered. There you have it!"

"Well, you won't do it! There you have it!"

Dick Ellett was a bold son of the soil, but he was not anxious to throw his life away. Looking beyond the Ben Nord foreman he saw twice as many men as he had on the spot, and all were so thoroughly armed that they bristled with guns. These little items impressed Dick.

"We were only going to dig a small channel," he expostulated.

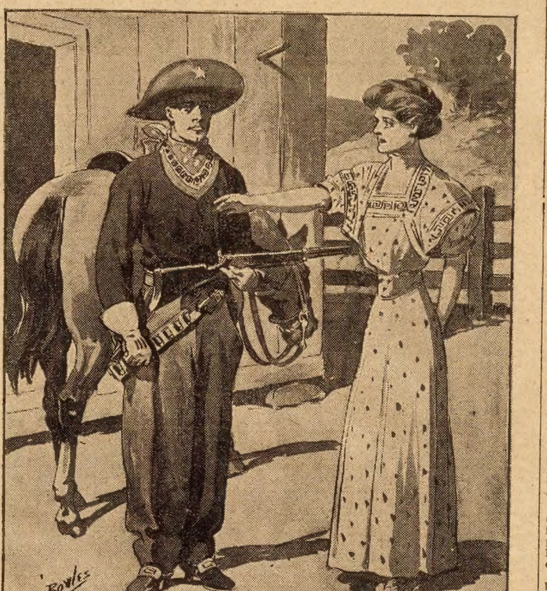
"A small channel, opened at that particular point," returned Knight, "will soon grow, through the force of natural laws, to a big one. The opening will enlarge under pressure, and all the water of Eagle Pond will go to Liberty claim—too much water, if I read the situation clear. That doesn't count. Ben Nord wants its share, and I am here to see that it gets it!"

"If we persist?" questioned Ellett tentatively.

"Then, the hole you have dug will be your grave!" grimly explained MacBree's foreman.

Dick had kept his temper, for he was a man of sagacity, but Manuel Quesolda now came into the game. Manuel was usually slave to his temper, and it was so now. He took up the gantlet and talked freely. He stormed, threatened, ranted and raved; he asserted that sanguinary war would be let loose on Scarlock if the rights of Liberty claim were thus curtailed, and that something appalling would happen if Sherwood's men were molested in any manner.

Napoleon let him have the floor for a time, and then came to the front again.



"Father is hurt—badly hurt!"

"There has been plenty of quarreling on Scarlock in the past, and yet old Zeke Dalton and MacBree thought it worth while to keep human blood just where nature put it. Live men can labor, but dead ones can't. I like live men, myself, and I don't care to cut off any of Sherwood's hands in their youth, but this I say plainly—this digging stops right here. If any of you turns up another spadeful of earth I'll shoot him! That is final!"

Elliott looked into the speaker's face and eyes and read the story they told. Manuel was still anxious to bluster, but his comrade showed better sense. Defeat was sure if hostilities were pressed. He wanted to live to fight another day. He shouldered his spade.

"Sherwood will hear of this!" he announced threateningly.

"Unless," suggested Napoleon, "he has stopped up the keyhole of his door to shut out sounds and keep light away from those weak eyes of his!"

"Don't you worry about his eyes; you'll find them keen enough bime-by. There will be a racket down at our place when I report."

"If Sherwood objects to anything, send him over to Ben Nord to see me!"

"He will come, fast enough."

"Good! I want to see what he looks like. A remarkable boss you have got there—a man who shuts himself up like a sick girl. Does he wear pants or skirts?"

"I know nothing about him!" snapped Ellett. "He is sick, and he never leaves that room. What of it? Oh! you beauties, just you wait until he comes out!"

"We have been waiting. Now, we hanker hugely to see him!"

Dick turned away and waved a hand at his men.

"We will go for now, fellers," he said, "but we will come back."

"When you do," returned Napoleon, "you will find armed men here, and they will have orders to shoot!"

"Huh!" snorted Dick, and with this he walked off.

The victors of the occasion watched the party file away down the slope.

"Hurrah for you, Knight!" exclaimed Jack Rantley, when he could check a paroxysm of laughter. "This is like old times. Oh! say, you are plenty much a dandy!"

Napoleon shrugged his shoulders and made no reply, but he looked at the gap the Liberty men had made before their arrival. Spades had been brought, and he set certain men to work refilling the cavity. They, with some others, were to remain on the spot with rifles until it was thought safe to withdraw them. Still, he looked for no more trouble over the water-flow. The game had been one of many that always had afflicted the rival claims. Started in secret, it was likely that publicity had killed it.

When all was arranged, the foreman took the rest of his followers and retraced his steps. They had ridden as far up the mountain as the footing would permit. Now, recovering their horses, they went back to the collection of buildings.

Knight gave his attention, next, to the mansion and its inmates. He was told that a messenger had been sent to bring a doctor for Fergus MacBree, who still lay insensible. Ben Nord was not without a degree of medical and surgical skill, and the injured man was receiving careful attention. Amateur diagnosis still pointed to concussion of the brain, but hope had not been abandoned.

Sandy had now returned from a distant point, and he talked with Napoleon. He was full of spirit and ready to do his part in all things. More than that, he exhibited sound sense, but he was more than formerly mindful of the fact that he was a boy, and he looked to the foreman for advice and leadership.

Knight, however, was not disposed to accept all the responsibility. He showed an inclination to temper impetuosity with prudence, and immediately announced that he desired a consultation with MacBree's children.

This word came to Sibyl at her father's bedside, and her resolution to give attention only to him was shaken. A little urging settled the matter, and the conferring parties assembled in the sittingroom. They were four—Napoleon, solid of frame and alert of mind; Sandy, a youthful giant, Sibyl, beautiful and queenly, and Janie, a slight girl with eyeglasses and the stamp of the scholar. Now, as was her custom, she carried a volume of Shakespeare in her hands.

"I have sent for Mr. Blakell," said Sibyl. "He should be able to advise us."

"'In the multitude of counsellors there is safety!'" quoted Janie.

Knight said nothing, but he was pleased when, a little later, a servant came to report that Blakell had gone riding.

The consultation began, and Napoleon made his statement. Comments followed. Janie confined herself to a quotation, but Sibyl and Sandy gave unqualified approval. The manner of the foreman, as well as his words, impressed them favorably.

"I think," added Napoleon, "that this serpent is scotched to stay. I look for no more trouble there. It is one thing to do a mean trick in secret, and another to act with guns in sight or likely to appear."

"But," said Sibyl, "they may return, after your men are withdrawn, and set about their work again."

"It is possible."

"This," added Sandy, "is the thing we have always had to contend with in our business—mean tricks from the other outfit. I don't see why they can't be decent. Still, they say the same about us."

"I wonder," Sibyl thoughtfully continued, "if it is possible to stop this affair permanently? Liberty has a new owner. If he would give his promise to let Eagle Pond alone——"

(Continued on page five.)

FIRELESS COOKING SOLVED!

Marvelous New Invention Settles the Question Forever—Sheer Sectional Cooker Lifts a Load from Hapless Housewives—No More Sweating, Stewing, Fretting, Fuming Your Life Away Over a Hot Stove—Women Swarm To See This Magic Cooker Work Without Fire—Agents Busy As Bees Rushing From One Sale To Another—Read On!

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Zirita of Glenaspen;

Or, THE PATH OF PERIL

By Gilbert Kildare

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Begun in No. 22, May 28. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCERNING VESTA.

THERE were few people in New York society who had not heard of Vesta Annandale. For the last season society had praised her, toasted her, raved over her and slandered her by turns; in fact done everything that is usual to the reigning belle. Her wealth and beauty were already the prey of many young men—and old ones, too—but so far none had seemed to force an entrance to her heart. Indeed she did not seem to care a great deal for society itself, and she took far more pleasure in visiting the slums of the great city, lifting many burdens from overtaxed shoulders and bringing happiness to many sorrowful hearts.

Mrs. Annandale idolized her beautiful daughter, and to see her launched brilliantly on the sea of matrimony was her fondest desire. She was continually scolding Vesta in a good-natured, motherly way for rejecting some proposed alliance with Congressman this, or Lord that, but to all her mother's entreaties she turned a deaf ear.

"Vesta," her mother asked her one evening as they sat alone, "why did you not accept Mr. Hardesty's offer? I know of at least a dozen girls who would almost give their eyes for him."

"I don't love him, mother," the girl answered in a low voice.

"And then, there was that foreign nobleman, Baron What's-his-name. Wasn't he in love with you also?"

"Mother, I know you wish to see me make a brilliant marriage, but you surely would not have me give my hand where my heart could not follow?"

"No, no, dear. I never want you to marry any one you do not love. But you are such a queer girl! I don't understand you in the least; yes, I, your own mother, will say so. Why, when I was your age, I should have loved a count out of mere gratitude if he asked me to marry him!"

"No, mother! How you old people do manage to forget your youth! You told me yourself that father was only a clerk, earning fifteen dollars a week, when you married him. And you eloped with him, too!"

"Well, well," Mrs. Annandale answered, feeling somewhat embarrassed, "there's no telling what a young girl will do. But my dear daughter, your happiness is the most precious thing on earth to me. Don't think that I want to force you into a marriage without love; but I do want you to be the envy of every other woman in New York, and I do wish you could fall in love with some distinguished suitor."

The girl bowed her head, and if the room had not been dark her mother would have seen the tears coming into her eyes. There was a slight noise at the open door behind them, but neither seemed to notice it.

"Mother," Vesta said after a while, "let me make a confession to you."

"Confession! My dear, darling Vesta make a confession! What has she to confess?"

Her mother was sympathy itself, and knelt beside her with her arms about her neck.

"I am in love already, mother. That is why I cannot marry any of those you wish me to."

"In love already! And I never even suspected it! You always were such a strange girl. Whom do you love?"

"Some one whom you know, mother, and some one whom you, too, love."

"Some one whom I know and love? Let me see, who can that be?"

Suddenly Mrs. Annandale sprang joyfully to her feet, exclaiming, "You don't mean Oswald?"

"Yes, Oswald."

Again there was a slight noise at the door, but they failed to notice it. Vesta arose, and turning on the light, looked at her mother in astonishment.

"Why mother, are you glad? I always thought you would be displeased if you knew I cared for him. You always said he was such a spendthrift. That is why I never told you."

"Glad! Glad!" Her mother threw her arms about her and hugged her. "I used to think when you were children how nice it would be if you cared for each other when you grew up, but you didn't seem to, so I gave up the idea and looked for a worthier man."

"Worthier man, indeed! As if Oswald weren't——"

"There, there, dear, don't be angry. How delighted I am! I would rather see you marry my dear brother Ralph's child than the Czar of Russia!"

At her words her daughter sank into a chair and began weeping softly.

"But it is so hopeless, mother. He doesn't care for me at all, or at least only as a sister."

"My poor child! Don't cry so, I am sure he will care for you. How can he help it?"

They sat in silence for a while, and Vesta gradually ceased to weep.

"Good evening!"

They both looked toward the door, and there stood a pale, haggard-looking man.

"Oswald! Wherever did you come from?" cried Mrs. Annandale. "I thought you were at the other end of the globe."

"No, I have not been very far away. But, what's this, Vesta, in tears?"

Vesta laughed nervously and dashed the tears angrily from her eyes.

"How haggard you look!" exclaimed his aunt, noticing the despondent expression of his face. "Have you been ill?"

"No, thank you, aunt. Quite well, I assure you."

"Where have you been?" asked Vesta, speaking for the first time. "You have been gone for nearly a year, it seems to me, and we did not even know where you were."

"Yes," her mother said, "you disappear from the face of the earth at times and no one has the slightest idea of your whereabouts. Where have you been?"

He clasped them both affectionately about the waist as he said, "Well, you have me back again, now, to stay, too, so what's the difference? Mrs. Annandale, will you leave us for a few moments? I have something to say to Vesta."

"Certainly," she answered, thinking as she left the room, " 'Don't care for her' indeed! I do believe he is going to propose to her now."

"Vesta," he said when she had gone, "Come and sit beside me on the sofa. I have a question to ask you."

She came and sat beside him. Her heart leaped gladly at his words. Was there, then, hope for her after all?

He placed his arm about her, saying, "We have known each other all our lives. I know I have a place in your heart, but tell me, is it all mine?"

She raised her large blue eyes and looked at him, mutely telling her secret.

"Dear Vesta, will you marry me?"

"Yes, Oswald."

Her love for him was so great that she did not notice the lack of ardor in his wooing. She felt so happy that she was speechless, and she let her head sink upon his breast, feeling like some tired pilgrim who has found a resting place after a wearisome journey. She sat there for the next few moments and listened to words of love poured into her ear, words that she had never dared hope to hear from his lips.

Presently Oswald called her mother back into the room.

"Congratulate us, aunt. Behold your son-in-law to be."

Mrs. Annandale laughed and cried by turns, and embracing them both, could only say, "I'm so happy! I'm so happy!"

"Poor girl, poor girl!" thought Oswald on his way home. "If she only knew how my heart aches for another! But I will not think of that false, heartless girl! She is not to be mentioned in the same breath with this angel. God knows, I will try to make her happy. What a surprise it was to me to hear her confessing her love to her mother! I never even dreamed of such a thing. How happy I will make her! And yet, if it were only—great God, what am I thinking of! I will forget her, I will, I will!"

CHAPTER XII.

ZIRITA'S RESOLUTION.

Poor Zirita! How wretched and heartbroken she felt on awaking the next morning. Before she fully realized what had occurred on the previous afternoon, she felt a dull sense of misery oppressing her; then the bitter truth came to her like a flash. Burying her head in the pillow she wept and wept. This had not been their first quarrel, by any means, but none of its predecessors had been so serious or had had such a fatal termination.

"What can be the matter with mother?" she thought. "She really seemed bent on parting me from Oswald yesterday! How strange, how strange! Why is it that she has no love for me? And that picture! Can it be possible that it could have been taken without my being aware of it? No, no, the idea is absurd. Where could it have come from. Oh, Oswald, Oswald!"

She arose and dressed herself like one in a dream. Leaving the room, she met her mother in the hall, but the latter did not notice her beyond giving her a rather curious glance. Putting on a jacket, for it was autumn and the morning was chilly, she left the house. She did not have the slightest idea of where she was going, she only wanted to be away from the place where she had been hurt so cruelly.

She wandered aimlessly across the fields, and presently found herself at the place where the wild flowers had been blooming when Oswald had first told her of his love. The flowers were all gone now, and there was nothing left but a few withering leaves. Here she broke down completely.

"Oh, my heart, my heart!" she cried, "it feels like a stone within me."

She fell upon her knees, and grasped the withering leaves in her hands. "There were flowers blooming here then, and how bright everything seemed! How happy I was that day! The flowers have gone now, gone like my happiness!"

She pressed the golden-brown leaves to her heart, and her tears fell upon them. As she gazed at them she thought, "Poor things! You are withering now because you have lost your flowers, like my heart will wither now that it has lost its flower—its love."

She would not have felt so wretched perhaps if she had really been guilty of doing something to forfeit his love. She was the truest and most noble-minded of women, and no thought of another had for a moment rested in her mind.

She ceased to weep and began to think. What had she done? Oswald had seen her in DeBracy's arms and imagined her to be untrue. She closed her lips tightly together, as she thought, with grim satisfaction, how little his love was in comparison with hers. She had had perfect trust in him, and nothing could have turned her from him other than his own declaration that he no longer cared for her. As she again thought of the picture it seemed to her that DeBracy had definitely intended the result he had accomplished. Yes, she was sure of it. And her mother, could she—— She could not bear to think of it. Again the utter hopelessness of her condition came upon her, and she gave herself up entirely to despair.

She cast herself upon the grass, but the fountain of her tears seemed exhausted, and she could only lie there and think of her misery. Now and then a long-drawn sigh escaped her, leaving her weaker than before.

Suddenly pride came to her aid, and she straightened up. "Why should I waste my affections on one who is so unjust?" she thought. "I will not think of him again, no, I will not!"

She arose to her feet and putting her garments in order, walked calmly back to the house. She was not so strong-minded as she imagined herself to be, however, and before many days elapsed she found herself longing to see Oswald again. Her few daily tasks now seemed empty and cheerless, and she could no longer take an interest in her singing. Every song she would attempt to sing brought back some memory of him, and she would leave the piano with a sorer heart than ever. What should she do, what should she do? She and her mother seemed estranged, and Mrs. Seymour hardly if ever spoke to her, and avoided her on every possible occasion.

Good Mrs. Sniggles' heart ached for her, but Zirita did not make a confidant of her and she feared the girl would be offended if she spoke of the subject to her. She tried by numerous little kind actions to show her sympathy, but Zirita accepted them gratefully, though silently. Sympathy is indeed a wonderful thing, and it is surprising how much can be endured with its help.

Mrs. Sniggles found her one day in tears with her head upon the piano. She forgot her position for once, and gently raising the girl's head, kissed her with tears in her own eyes.

"Poor little dear! Don't take on so."

"Thank you, Mrs. Sniggles, thank you. But I am so sad."

Mrs. Sniggles drew her away from the piano, and took her to the sofa. She sat down beside her, saying, "Now tell me about it. I know 'ow you feel, miss, oh, yes, indeed I do."

She confided to the good woman, and when Mrs. Sniggles had heard, she said, "Poor little thing! Don't you think 'e will be sorry and come back? Oh, yes, of course, 'e will come back."

Zirita stamped her foot in anger.

"I hope he will, I hope he will! But I will never speak to him again as long as I live."

"That's right, that's right. But 'e will be sorry, miss, you mark my words, 'e will be sorry. Of course you'll make hup with 'im though, it wouldn't be right not to. 'E couldn't 'elp it, you see 'e didn't hunderstand 'ow it was."

"If he cared for me like he should, he wouldn't doubt my word, would he?"

"Don't you think, miss, that if you was to go away somewhere on a visit you would feel better?"

Zirita remained silent for a few moments.

"Yes, I believe I should. Everything around here reminds me of him, and if I were away among new scenes I might forget him. Oh, if I could!"

" 'Ave you any friends that you would care to visit, mum?"

"Yes, I have. Vesta often asked me to visit her when I was at the conservatory."

"That girl as you knew at the singin' school, miss? But hain't she some relation to him?"

"Yes, his cousin; but that is all the better, she is just the one to comfort me. Mrs. Sniggles, you have made me feel so much better."

She arose to leave the room.

"I am going to get ready now," she said. "I am going away as soon as possible. Dear Vesta, I know she will be so glad to see me!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MARTYR.

A few days later found Zirita installed in Vesta's home. At first she shrank from confiding in Vesta, but her forlorn and heartsick expression did not escape the eyes of her friend, and one evening as they sat together in an arbor, Vesta said, "Zirita, what has come over you? You are like a different person. You were always quiet, I know, but what on earth does that sad, far-away expression in your eyes mean?"

In answer Zirita only bowed her head and sighed.

"What is the matter? Dear Zirita, do tell me. You know I have always been your truest friend; there is nothing I would not do to help you."

"Thank you, Vesta, thank you. I know you are my best and truest friend, but you can do nothing for me—nothing. No one can."

"Then you have a secret! I thought so. I have a secret, too," she said, half shyly. "Now, you tell me your secret and then I will tell you mine," she added playfully.

Vesta, like most genuinely sympathetic people, had a way of entering into a person's feelings which made her almost impossible to resist, and she finally induced Zirita to tell her everything but the name of her lover. When she finished she was overcome by her sorrow, and gave vent to tears. Vesta endeavored to soothe her, but could not. Finally she said, "I cannot understand about that picture. You say you never had one taken?"

"No, never since I was a child."

"Then the original must have been some one else. Have you any relatives whom you resemble?"

"No, none whatever. People have often said that I do not look like either my father or mother. I have not the slightest idea who it could have been. The picture looked exactly like me, and strangest of all, the dress the girl wore was a great deal like one my father had in his room." And she told Vesta about the ball and her encounter with DeBracy.

"How very odd! It is certainly a strange thing. There must be some mystery about it. But you have not told me the name of your lover."

"It is some one whom you know," she answered in a low voice. "Oh, dear, how often I used to picture myself telling you my secret! How different I supposed it would be! I was going to feel so proud, and you should be so glad. How different it is now."

"Who is he?"

"He is your cousin, Oswald."

"Oswald!" Vesta uttered the name with such a gasp that Zirita looked at her astonished. Her face became ghastly, and she trembled violently. In a moment it was all clear to Vesta, as she remembered Oswald's despondent look and his sudden proposal. For a moment her heart was filled with anger, as she thought, "He does not love me at all, he was only going to marry me to make her think he did not care!"

"Why, Vesta, what is the matter?" Zirita asked.

"Nothing, only I am very much surprised. I can understand your case better now; I have known Oswald for a long time, and I know how jealous he is."

Her anger gradually subsided, and as she looked at Zirita she thought, "Poor little thing! I am sure Oswald must love her. There is some dreadful mystery about it all. Poor things, they are both to be pitied."

For a moment there was a temptation to hold Oswald to his promise and be happy at any cost, but it was gone in a moment. How could she be happy with him when she knew his every thought was for another? And how could she have a moment's peace when she would know that her happiness was only at the expense of Zirita's? For she knew that a person of Zirita's temperament could not recover from this, her first great sorrow, very soon. Yes, she would give him up.

She placed her arm around Zirita, saying, "My poor little friend! Don't blame Oswald too much. Appearances were very much against you. He is really to be pitied as much as yourself."

"I don't see why, I am sure. He should have had more faith in me than that."

"But he is more suspicious than you. He has not your trusting nature. It is not his fault if he is naturally jealous, is it? And indeed that is another proof that he loves you. If he did not love you he would not be jealous."

"Yes," Zirita answered, thoughtfully. "That is what he told me himself once, 'If I did not love you I would not be jealous.' "

"Listen! There is some one coming," Vesta said quickly, and as soon as she uttered the words a man entered the arbor. It was Oswald.

When he saw Zirita he uttered a sharp cry and turned to go, but Vesta sprang toward him and clutched his arm.

"Don't go," she said. "I know all. Stay."

"No," he answered, "I cannot stay. If you know all, then you know why I wish to be as far away from that girl as possible."

"Don't go, I beg," she pleaded, still holding him. "I only ask that you do justice to one whom you have most cruelly wronged."

Her voice became unsteady, and as he noticed it he became more gentle.

"I would have tried to make you happy," he said so low that Zirita did not hear him. She stood aloof, regarding him with a half-sad, half-disdainful glance.

"I was not speaking of myself," Vesta said with something like a sob. "I am sorry now that you know my secret, but I will not speak of that."

Zirita looked at her with a puzzled expres-

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sion, and she turned to her saying, "I, too, loved him; but he does not care for me. You are the one nearest his heart."

Oswald took a step toward them, but Zirita ignored him.

"Come, Vesta," she said, "let us return to the house. It is growing late. We have both loved one who is far too unworthy of it."

Vesta took her by the hand and said, "Zirita, it hurts me to have to speak of this, but I know my love is hopeless. I blame no one. It has pleased Heaven to place this cross upon me; I do not complain, I accept it."

She raised her eyes Heavenward, and the last rays of the setting sun glanced through the vines upon her. Years afterward Zirita and Oswald could recall her as she stood there, like some bright creature from another sphere.

She gently drew them toward each other and joined their hands. Neither made any resistance.

"I ask one favor of you both," she continued. "Oswald, Zirita does love you. You have treated her most unjustly. For my sake take her to your heart again. That is as near as I can ever be to happiness!"

"Zirita—loves—me?" he repeated slowly.

"Yes, she has told me so. DeBracy's words were false. Do not doubt my word."

"I love her, I can never tell how much!" he cried. "I have tried to overcome it, but in vain. Zirita, I do believe in you. I have wronged you, will you forgive me?"

"Thank Heaven, I hear you say that," cried Vesta, smiling through her tears. "Zirita, remember it is for my happiness as well as your own. Forgive him; he has suffered as much as you."

In answer Zirita went to his side and he drew her to his breast. Vesta gave him one sorrowful, longing look, and stifling her sobs, silently withdrew. She had made them happy, but at what a cost no one could ever know.

"I will leave them alone for a while," she thought. "May God bless them both and make them happy!"

It was almost dark, and the figure of a man was just noticeable as he crept along after her. Just as she reached the house the man sprang, and grasping her by the shoulders, said savagely, "Damn you for a meddler! All my work you have brought to nothing. Take that for your pains!" And he plunged a knife into her side. With a single cry she fell forward. He stopped to examine her; she was dead.

At her cry Zirita and Oswald rushed from the arbor just in time to see the man rise from her side. The light from a near-by window shone full upon his face before he turned to flee. Both recognized him. It was DeBracy!

CHAPTER XIV.

A SON OF CAIN.

DeBracy arrived at his home the next morning haggard and worn looking. There was a haunted look in his eyes, and his face was unusually flushed. He seemed to be excited, for he paced up and down the floor muttering under his breath. Finally he sat down at a small table and rang a bell. A moment later a servant maid appeared at the door.

"Tell James to come here," he said.

The girl withdrew with a nod, and almost immediately a small dark man appeared at the door. He was the one whom Zirita had encountered on the night of her adventure.

"Pack my things at once," said DeBracy sharply. "I am going away."

The man looked at him, but did not move. DeBracy rapped sharply on the table as he said, "Damn you! What are you standing there like that for? I said to pack my things. I am going away."

"I know what you said," the man answered slowly, without moving.

"Well, why don't you go?"

"I will—when I get ready."

DeBracy looked at him in surprise.

"What the devil has come over you? Go and pack my grip. I am in a hurry to get away."

"I don't care," the man answered as he walked slowly over to a chair and sat down. "Look here, Armand," he uttered the name with a sneer, "I think it is time you and I were quits."

"What!"

"I am sorry your hearing seems to be so bad this morning. I said I think it is time you and I were quits."

"Why, what has come over you? Don't you get enough money?"

"Oh, yes. But that is not it."

He took a case from his pocket, and selecting a cigarette therefrom, lit it and puffed away contentedly.

"Well, what is the matter?"

"Well, to be frank Ulirc, I don't like you; you are too overbearing."

"And if you leave what do you suppose will become of her?" asked DeBracy, pointing upward.

"Don't know, care less."

His manner seemed to madden DeBracy, for he sprang from his chair and grasped the man by the arm. He looked up at DeBracy and laughed. "Sorry to see you take it so hard, old sport," he said as he blew a cloud of smoke in his master's face. "Say, now, frankly, don't you think the old life was the best?"

DeBracy's face was now a leaden color, and he clutched the man's throat. His voice shook with anger, as he said, "By all Hell, Guido, if you keep on talking like that I will kill you!"

"So, so, Ulric. Let me go, your embrace is too tight. Let me go, I say!"

DeBracy, with a swift movement, threw the man from the chair and they both fell upon the floor. He put his knee on the man's chest, and pinned him to the floor.

"Now," he said, his voice quivering, "I am the master, again, as you see. Do you intend to be satisfied with your position hereafter?"

The man drew a knife from his belt, but DeBracy was too quick for him. Snatching it from his hand, he raised his arm, and the steel gleamed wickedly in the sunlight as it fell with a sudden movement. The next moment the man lay perfectly still with the knife buried deep in his breast.

DeBracy arose. He gazed for a moment on the man's face, then laughed quietly to himself and left the room.

A few hours later a carriage drove up to DeBracy's door. Two men in policemen's garb emerged from it, followed by Oswald. He ran up the steps, followed by the two policemen. They searched one room after another, but found no one except a frightened-looking servant girl, who was crying in a corner. She was too hysterical to answer intelligibly any questions they asked her.

"I am afraid our bird has flown," said one of the policemen.

"I was afraid we would be too late," the other answered.

"Hist!" cried Oswald, putting his finger to his lips. "What was that?"

"What?"

"Listen. Don't you hear anything?"

A low moan seemed to be coming from the diningroom.

"There is some one in there," cried Oswald, as he ran to the door and threw it open. He could see nothing at first, but hearing the moan again, he noticed the man lying on the floor under the table, partly concealed by the tablecloth.

"Oh, oh!" he cried. Beckoning to the policemen, he hurried to the man's side and raising him, carried him to a divan in a corner of the room.

"Another one!" said one of the men.

"Yes," Oswald answered. "He tried to kill this one, too."

The wounded man opened his eyes at the words, and said faintly, "Yes, he did it."

"Who?"

With a moan the man closed his eyes.

"He is dying," said Oswald; "DeBracy has hurled one more soul into eternity!"

"Yes," the man answered with an effort. "I am dying. Let me alone and I will tell you all."

He half raised himself, but fell back again. "Water," he whispered.

The hysterical maid had entered, and stood in a corner with wide open eyes, and Oswald motioned her to procure some water. She went to a cupboard near and brought forth a bottle of wine, evidently having recovered her faculties.

"Here," she said, "this will be better."

One of the policemen raised the man to a sitting posture, and Oswald held the glass to his lips. He eagerly drank the contents, then he lay back on the divan again and said, "He killed me. I knew he would do it some day! Listen and I will tell you all."

And the following is the import of his statement, which will be found in next week's Ledger. If you like the Ledger, and we feel sure you do, we would like to have you send in a subscription and take it regularly. A great many thrilling and unusual stories will appear in it during the coming year. You will find it a weekly treat, hence you had better send in your subscription now. Let us hear from you.

Speaking Kindly.

"Speak kindly." Two little words, but what a deal of joy or sorrow they express. Speak kindly to all. How many people in the world are hungering for a kind word. It is true that it is not easy to always restrain angry words, but if we would stop and think of the consequences, we might speak kindly.

Husband, speak kindly to your wife, for you little know how much she treasures one kind word or loving caress. Many of our divorces have been caused in the first place by angry words. The Magdalen whom you now shun was once pure and good, and her downfall may be traced back to angry words when a single little word or act of kindness would have saved her. But you say:

"That is foolish; she knew better than to be wicked."

True; but a woman needs love even as a plant does the sun, and she will do anything to gain it. If given by the one she has bound herself to for life, most women would never wish for any other attentions; but if denied by him, there are plenty of other men ready to praise and admire.

Speak kindly to the children. Do not hurt their tender feelings by harsh and angry expressions. Do not scold them for every trifling offense, thereby causing them to be sly and deceitful.

Thousands of our criminals might have been ornaments of society today if they had been used kindly. Do not scold your little sons or daughters because they soil their clothes or break some article of your own, as if they had done an unheard-of crime. Talk with them, let them see that you are displeased, but do it kindly. Then your children will not tell untruths to hide their faults. Many a little one tells a lie to hide some little fault, because if found out he is sure of a scolding.

Speak kindly to the aged and poor. Have a word of cheer to the old people who are nearing their journey's end. It will make them happy, and it will bring a blessing to you. It costs nothing, but it is a great deal to those who receive it.

"A little word in kindness spoken," etc., may be the means of saving an immortal soul, and an angry word may drive some one to perdition. How will you answer to God at that last day for the unkind words you have spoken?

Think of it and try to be kind to all. It rests with us whether we speak crossly or kindly, and we may do much evil or good by the single word we speak. Oh, then, speak kindly, remembering that Jesus, our guide, never opened His lips but to utter words of kindness.

An Unidentified Error.

The Critic—In the twelfth chapter of your novel you say, "As Clifford Dangerfield came slowly up the long garden walk, Clarissa, with maidenly admiration, gazed upon him."

The Author—Well, isn't that all right?

The Critic—Hardly. How can Clarissa "gaze" after she has been blinded?

The Author—After she has been blinded? What are you talking about?

The Critic—Why, in the previous chapter, in which you describe Clifford's planing mill, you say "For a long fascinating minute Clarissa rested her beautiful brown eyes upon the swiftly revolving buzz saw."

The Same Principle.

Mesta—Isn't it true that a man working in a candy factory soon loses all desire for the product?

Staffords—Yes; why do you ask?

Mesta—I was wondering whether the same principle didn't apply to McSoiler.

Stafford—McSoiler? Does he work in a candy factory?

Mesta—No, a soap factory.

Lords of the Ax.

(Continued from page three.)

She stopped, and, after a pause, Knight replied:

"I can go to Liberty and ask to see Sherwood, but you know how your father came out. Sherwood may refuse to see me."

Sibyl glanced at the clock.

"It is getting late," she said, "but tomorrow will come. If father does not need me, perhaps I will ride over and demand audience with the new owner."

"That's the ticket!" cried Sandy. "Sherwood can't refuse to see a lady!"

Napoleon meditated more deliberately, seeing all the difficulties of the project, but he suddenly slapped his thigh with his open hand.

"Do it!" he advised. "Sherwood can't refuse."

"I'll make him promise to let Eagle Pond alone," asserted the girl.

There were new sounds outside the door and Carlos Blakell entered. He was in a state of excitement and clearly prepared for some announcement, but, seeing Knight, he stopped short.

"Oh! I say!" he exclaimed, "how did you come out? Are they still digging?"

"No," answered Napoleon. "Eagle Pond is safe."

"You have done well, and when Mr. MacBree recovers I will state as much to him. But, I say, I have taken Sherwood down a peg!" and Mr. Blakell began striding to and fro with heavy steps.

"What have you done?" asked Sibyl, a trace of uneasiness in her voice and manner.

"When I heard what was going on up at Eagle Pond it occurred to me that the way to deal with the case was to go to headquarters. Of course, the responsible party was the master, not his men. Acting on this idea I had my horse saddled and I rode over to Liberty. Arrived there I asked to see Sherwood. What do you think—the poor-spirited fellow refused to see me! I didn't see him, myself, but that was the word the servant brought. However, I more than got square!"

Blakell swung his arms and bubbled over with enthusiasm.

"How?" demanded Sandy.

Blakell stopped short in his walk, grew suddenly sober, came to the table where the others sat and posed magnificently.

"There is only one way to bring a cad to terms!" he declared. "I took that way. Still mouthed, I rode back and forth under Sherwood's window, showing myself freely, and then I called out in a clear voice and formally challenged him to fight me a duel according to the authorized code!"

Sibyl's face flushed deeply.

"What did he say?" asked Sandy slowly.

"He? Pah! the coward was stilled into silence. What did he say? Not a word!"

"Did you see him?"

"No! Not a sound came from that room, and the shades remained down. I can imagine Sherwood quaking, terrified at being brought to righteous judgment, but he said nothing. As far as sight or sound was concerned, he might have been a dead man. But he has been formally challenged, and I fancy we shall have no more trouble with Liberty claim!"

The boaster had a circle of serious faces around him, and Sibyl was deeply embarrassed. He was her guest, and though she had, in the past, overlooked certain lapses of judgment on his part, she was now unspeakably mortified. It was not her province to pass verdict on the practise of dueling, but her imagination pictured Blakell riding to and fro and hurling his challenge at a closed window, and she was ashamed for him and herself. Ben Nord had been made ridiculous, and ridicule in words would follow.

She stole a glance at Napoleon Knight, but he was gazing hard at the table.

Sandy bounced up suddenly.

"When the duel comes off," he said, "call me in as a bottle-holder!"

Blakell had more to say, but it was Janie who listened chiefly. Sibyl was leaving the room when she remembered something, stopped and went to Knight's side.

"I will ride over and see Asa Sherwood in the morning!" she announced.

The foreman went about his duties. An hour later he met Sandy again.

"James Anderson took a sudden departure, didn't he?" asked the boy.

"How's that—Anderson gone?" returned Napoleon.

"Yes. He fell to manfully and did what he could to help father, after the accident, but presently announced that he felt he would be in the way here; so he took his walking-staff and went away for good, just as he came. You know he is a gentleman tourist."

The foreman looked intently into empty space.

"Is he?" he asked.

"Yes. We shall see him no more."

"Perhaps not!" answered Knight, turning away.

The continuation of this extremely interesting story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. It leads to very strange and fascinating situations. Read it. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year.

Thoughtful to the Last.

Ashley—Isn't it too bad about poor Fuser?

Seymour—Indeed it is. I shall always remember him as the most considerate man I have ever known. It seemed to be his ruling passion to make as little trouble for other people as he possibly could.

Ashley—Yes, that's a fact; and that characteristic of his was manifested even when he committed suicide.

Seymour—I don't think I quite understand?

Ashley—Why, he used so much dynamite that there was nothing left of him for other people to pick up.

It All Depends.

Little Willie—Say, pa, what is the difference between investigating and meddling?

Pa—It depends altogether on who is doing it, my son. If you meddle with the affairs of your neighbors it's investigating; but if he investigates your affairs it's meddling.

FEED CHILDREN

On Properly Selected Food. It Pays Big Dividends.

If parents will give just a little intelligent thought to the feeding of their children the difference in the health of the little folks will pay, many times over, for the small trouble.

A mother writes saying: "Our children are all so much better and stronger than they ever were before we made a change in the character of the food. We have quit using potatoes three times a day with coffee and so much meat.

"Now we give the little folks some fruit, either fresh, stewed, or canned, some Grape-Nuts with cream, occasionally some soft boiled eggs, and some Postum for breakfast and supper. Then for dinner they have some meat and vegetables.

"It would be hard to realize the change in the children, they have grown so sturdy and strong, and we attribute this change to the food elements that, I understand, exist in Grape-Nuts and Postum.

"A short time ago my baby was teething and had a great deal of stomach and bowel trouble. Nothing seemed to agree with him until I tried Grape-Nuts softened and mixed with rich milk and he improved rapidly and got sturdy and well."

Read "The Road to Wellville," found in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

INVISIBLE.

"Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?"
"I can't tell, because—oh, well—
A chicken swallowed it, you know."

FREE ASTHMA AND HAY FEVER CURE.

D. J. Lane, a chemist at 116 Lane Bldg., St. Mary's, Kansas, manufactures a remedy for Asthma and Hay Fever in which he has so much confidence that he sends a $1 bottle by express to anyone who will write him for it. His offer is that he is to be paid for it if it cures and the one taking the treatment is to be the judge.

His Game.

"Some say there is a sucker born every minute."

"I don't know anything about that," responded the eminent trust magnate. "Nor do I care, so long as the birth rate of ultimate consumers remains as satisfactory as it is."

WOMEN SHOULD KNOW THIS.

Have you tried various remedies for diseases peculiar to our sex? Suppositories and cones are mostly cocoa butter, olive oil or other fats. They can't cure you. Medical Science has discovered that these fats and oils prevent the action of the medicine. You should know why. I want to explain it to you. And I want you to try a remedy which will cure—which contains no oils or fats—just pure medicine that acts quickly and surely. I will send a liberal trial, and the explanatory booklet absolutely free. Address Ella Howard, Box 495, South Bend, Ind.

That Strange Feeling.

He didn't know he was in love,
We really must confess
He thought the feeling
Upon him stealing
Was merely biliousness.

Dependable Proprietary Medicines.

It must be admitted by every fair-minded, intelligent person, that a medicine could not live and grow in popularity for thirty years, and to-day hold a record for thousands upon thousands of actual cures, as has Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, without possessing great virtue and actual worth. Such medicines must be looked upon and termed both standard and dependable by every thinking person.

Posted.

Teacher—What kind of a bird did Noah send out of the ark?

Small Boy—A dove.

Teacher—I'm surprised to find that the smallest boy in the class is the only one to know.

Big Boy—Please, teacher, his father keeps a bird shop.

Another Big Land Opening.

News has been received that the Yakima Indian Reservation, consisting of 1,200,000 acres, will soon be thrown open to the people free of charge. The editor knows that this land is right in the center of one of the greatest fruit districts in the United States, and every reader of the paper should write in for information about this wonderful country and the country's great gift to the people. Drop a line, enclosing stamp for reply, to the Reservation Information Bureau, U. S. Postoffice Bldg., North Yakima, Wash.

Garden Pests.

Conductor—Hello, Subbs! What's in the big bag—garden seeds?

Commuter—Not exactly. Going to plant it in my garden, though—it's arsenic.

Conductor—Great Scott! What do you expect to raise?

Commuter—The mortality rate among my neighbors' cats, dogs and poultry.

Fireless Cookers.

One of the greatest inventions in the world for the housewife is the fireless cooker. With this wonderful invention all the cook needs to do is to put the dinner in the fireless cooker, put on the cover and then she may attend to her other duties. The editor of this paper has a fireless cooker in his home and considers it one of his greatest comforts. With a fireless cooker it is impossible to burn the food and it does away with all the heat and disagreeable features of a stove. Thousands of these fireless cookers are being sold. They are so simple and such labor saving devices that they sell at sight. Every reader of this paper should write the H. M. Sheer Co., 212 Hampshire street, Quincy, Ill., for circular about their fireless cookers. A picture of the cooker and further information will be found at the top of the column on page 3 of this issue.

THE CHICAGO LEDGER

Entered as second-class matter June 25, 1885, at the post-office at Chicago, Illinois, under act of March 3, 1879.

Published Every Saturday

BY W. D. BOYCE CO., CHICAGO, ILL.

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Single subscriptions to The Chicago Ledger by mail $1.00 a year, 50 cents for six months, in advance. Remittances should be made by Bank Draft, Registered Letter, Post-office or Express Money Order- payable to The Chicago Ledger. Subscription price in Canada $1.50 a year. We do not send receipts for money paid on subscriptions; the address tab on your paper shows the date to which your subscription is paid.

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The Ledger employs no traveling agents to solicit subscriptions, and every person working in that capacity is a fraud. No person is authorized to take subscriptions for the Ledger unless he or she be well known in the city or village where they have been appointed agents to sell this paper every week. A liberal reward will be paid for evidence that will enable us to arrest and convict such persons as are now traveling from town to town in different sections of this country, claiming to be agents of the Ledger and thereby defrauding the people. Beware of strangers.

ADVERTISING RATES.

The advertising rate is $1.60 per Agate Line per issue. About eight words to a line, 14 lines to an inch. This price also includes insertion of the advertisement in THE SATURDAY BLADE. THE BLADE and LEDGER together have a circulation of

750,000 COPIES WEEKLY

ADDRESS ALL LETTERS TO
THE CHICAGO LEDGER
CHICAGO, ILL.

GENTLE JAB. S

The chief end of man is his finish.

Be sure you are wrong before you offer an apology.

It is well to be useful, but don't let people use you.

New York aims to show Roosevelt its complete census.

When a girl marries in haste it's sometimes her last chance.

If cleanliness is next to godliness most tramps must be agnostics.

The small boy makes a home run when he hears his father calling him.

Have you always done the best you could? You know very well you haven't.

This is a generous country. It isn't holding Roosevelt responsible for Taft.

A retired burglar tells us that a lot of safes are not what they are cracked up to be.

Some men are known by the company they keep and others by the lawyers they hire.

Though the beef trust is innocent as its own spring lambs the statute of limitations looks good to it.

If given three guesses could you guess why a married man seldom has any use for a phonograph?

Our idea of a successful salesman is one who can persuade people to want what he wants them to want.

An Ohio man killed in an explosion carried all his money with him, and it has disappeared. However, there is some consolation for him in the fact that he won't need it.

By demonstrating what a bully good time a man may have as ex-President, Mr. Roosevelt may cause some of the European rulers to consider the matter of abdicating and giving their sons a show.

Who shall say that science doesn't do anything for the common people? It is kind of the astronomers to sit up all night to tell just how Halley's comet looks and how fast it is going so that the rest of us can sleep.

A surgeon cut a piece of glass from the vermiform appendix of a New York man without waiting to see if it was an effort of nature to equip that delicate organ with windows, so that it could see what was coming along to vex it.

Future generations will rise and call us blessed for proving that the tail of a comet will not bite. Whenever a fiery wanderer comes they can give it the glad hand, as it were, and proceed with the business of the day without losing any sleep or throwing any fits.

A farmer's wife in New Brighton, Minn., is raising a brood of pigs with a nursing bottle. From what we learn as to the value of pork by talking with the ultimate retailer we should not be surprised to hear of pigs being born with souvenir spoons in their mouths.

Down in Arizona a dam is just being completed which will form the largest artificial lake in the world. It is named the Roosevelt dam. How would you like to have a large, moist dam named after you? Or would your ambition be satisfied if you could get your name hitched to a 5-cent cigar?

Detective Keeneyes' Solution;

Or, The Mystery of the Deserted House

By J. Breckenridge Ellis

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Begun in No. 20, May 14. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FINDS IT TOO EASY.

"UPON my word——" began Edgar Beame.

"No, wait," Keeneyes interposed, with the zest of a schoolboy solving a rebus. He balanced his spoon upon his finger and continued:

"In this story there are two men, who are rivals for the hand of the young lady mentioned by you so regretfully; a young lady evidently in love with one of the young men. I say, her heart was already lost to one of the rivals, for had she not been sentimentally attached to one of them, you would certainly have made it a point to see her later. You say you have never seen her since that time, yet you were greatly interested in her. Therefore, you found her engaged to be married, and had reason to think that nothing could prevent that marriage, and therefore you are sure that the marriage took place soon after your departure."

"That is excellently reasoned," cried Edgar.

"Never do you mind how it is reasoned," said Keeneyes, sharply. "Of course the reasoning is excellent. What I want of you is an admission that the facts are as I have stated them."

"Exactly as you have stated them."

"Very good. Excellent, if I may say so. It is necessary for us to have the names of these rivals, in order to refer to them, unless you are willing for me to call them A and B. As for me, I am quite willing to refer to them as A and B, for to me they are nothing but abstractions. But your intellect, which is only capable of grappling with the concrete——"

"I will give their names, if you will leave my intellect alone," said Edgar, with a rather rueful smile. "One was named Ballinger—as profane a fellow as I ever listened to; and the other, whom Ballinger tried to capture that the mob might hang him, was named John Gradge. You will want to know which was favored by Miss Richards. Well, incredible as it may seem, she loved John Gradge whose very father told me the son had murdered Miss Richards' father; and that father confessed to me that he was a chicken-thief and horse-thief. Yet Miss Richards, though I told her all this, laughed in the merriest way, and ran away with that murderer."

"Oh," said Keeneyes, "but it was her stepfather, and not her real father."

"How do you guess that?"

"By the merry laughter you speak of, which would be out of place, even had the stepfather been murdered; from which we conclude that he was not murdered."

"But John Gradge's own father——"

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Keeneyes.

"But the mob knew he had been murdered——"

"My friend, you speak utter nonsense. And so, in this deserted house you met, in the first place, whom?"

"First came this Ballinger, at dead of night. He went upstairs, was up there but a moment, came down—drove away—I don't know why he came."

"You do not know why he came?" exclaimed Keeneyes in astonishment. "Is it possible that any one can be so stu—I beg your pardon. And who was the next to be seen in this house?"

"In the storeroom, behind the table which was loaded with canned provisions, a man was crouching. I saw his bare toe, locked him in the room, and went on exploring."

"Oh, yes," said Keeneyes, nodding his head. "That man, you of course divined, was Mr. Richards?"

"Of course not. Mr. Richards was murdered, as I have told you."

"You found the corpse, then?"

"Certainly not. But John Gradge's own father——"

Keeneyes pushed away his soup. "Positively, I have lost my appetite," he said peevishly. "For heaven's sake do not refer to John Gradge's father again. But pray tell me, who do you think that bare-toed gentleman was?"

"I know who it was, for afterward I found him upstairs hiding in the clothes closet. It was John Gradge's own father, as he confessed voluntarily."

Keeneyes laughed. "You persist in that fiction. Very well, have it your own way. And where was Miss Richards while you were upstairs. That was hardly proper, was it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, for you and the young lady to be upstairs in that bedroom, even if there was a thief in the closet."

"The young lady was not upstairs."

"Oh, I see. She had gone downstairs. Very good. But tell me who else did you see in this deserted house?"

"The next was not seen, but heard. A young man had fastened himself into the rear bedroom, downstairs, where he was taking a bath. We talked through the door, but he told me nothing except that he was going to vanish. When I broke into the room he was gone. On the chair were some bloodstains, a knife, and bits of rope."

"I now know everything," said Keeneyes nodding. "Shall I tell you just how matters were arranged, from beginning to end."

"But I have said nothing of the torn letter, the parts of which I put together, but which, unfortunately, I did not get to read entirely."

"My dear fellow, what do I care about that?" exclaimed Keeneyes. "Pray do not overwhelm and suffocate me with so many clews. You have already told me far too many. They would confuse any one but myself. Be patient, then, and do justice to this excellent black bass, while I narrate the whole story to you in its order."

CHAPTER XXV.

CONFIDENCE OF KEENEYES.

"You think, then," said Edgar Beame skeptically, "that you can solve the mystery, without having visited the deserted house?"

"I think so," said Keeneyes, easily.

"And I am sure of it," spoke up Brown.

"I shall be amazed," said Edgar. "And, of course, I shall be delighted."

"Very good," returned Keeneyes; "I will then proceed to delight you."

He paused to taste his fish, which was most excellently browned, and then continued:

"To begin at the beginning, my young friend, it is necessary for you to know that there was a man, Richards by name, who was blessed with a most beautiful and vivacious stepdaughter. I say she was beautiful and I say she was vivacious, because able to make so deep an impression upon you, in so short a time."

"And you say truly," responded Edgar, with a sigh.

"Very good. Excellent. Now, this young lady was loved by two men, one of whom, as you state, a profane, and, it may be inferred, a hardened character, more or less of a villain, if you please, named Ballinger.

"But, as you say, the young lady loves a certain John Gradge. Does Ballinger enjoy this situation? I put it to you, is that likely? And, this Ballinger who tries to hang his rival, and who excites mobs to that purpose, and who swears so prodigiously, is it likely that he will fold his hands, and allow Miss Richards and this John Gradge quietly to get married?"

"Not if he could help it, I suppose."

"Exactly. And don't you suppose that sort of a character will attempt to help it?"

"But what can he do?"

"We will see what he does," returned Keeneyes in a leisurely manner. "What can he do, you inquire?"

"I inquire that," said Edgar, who did not exactly relish the detective's superior airs toward him.

"Good. And I will answer. What can he do? Well, in the first place, he can get on the good side of Richards. You understand? He can induce Richards to favor his suit, to refuse John Gradge. Very good. Now we have it. Miss Richards loves John Gradge, but her stepfather favors Ballinger. You follow me?"

"That is not far to follow," remarked Edgar. "I believe I have already told you as much, or more."

"My dear fellow you have told me everything, but as you don't seem to know when you have solved a mystery, I thought it best to recapitulate. Very good. So Ballinger goes to John Gradge, and, says he:

"'Mr. Richards, I love your daughter, as you know, but she favors this scamp John Gradge,'—for, mark you, John is a scamp in Ballinger's eyes, because a successful rival. Ballinger continues:

"'Now, Mr. Richards, my dear prospective stepfather-in-law,' says he, or with some other endearment to that effect, 'do you,' says he, 'hide yourself, and I will pretend that you have been murdered. But first, have a big quarrel with John Gradge. On your hiding yourself, I will make it appear that it was John who killed you, and threw your body into some well, or pit, or hole, or wherever you like——'"

"The Cascade River?" asked Edgar, with a smile.

"That will do as well as any place," said Keeneyes, also smiling.

"The reason I smiled," began Edgar——

"Oh, I know why you smiled," returned Keeneyes; "you think me mistaken. Very good. Then this Ballinger says to Richards, 'If you,' says he, 'will take your daughter to my deserted house, on any pretext you please, without any one knowing of the trip—take her there on a sort of drive, or tour of inspection, to that house which I have had built, hoping to bring my bride to it——' thus Ballinger converses, 'then, I will imprison your daughter upstairs, set the dogs to guard the staircase, and you can conceal yourself in one of the rooms—for instance, the rear bedroom, downstairs. You must keep hid,' says he, 'till we drive John Gradge out of the neighborhood. If he is hung it'll be no great loss; in that event, no danger of his marrying Miss Richards,' says he."

"Your imagination is excellent," remarked Edgar drily.

"Thank you," responded Keeneyes.

"But you forget," Edgar objected, "that the very father of John Gradge admitted to me——"

"Nonsense," retorted Keeneyes. "Why, my dear young friend, can it be possible that, in these days of enlightenment, in these days of the electric light and telephone, to say nothing of the phonograph, that you persist in believing that that man who made the confession to you was John Gradge's father?"

"So he said."

"And admitted that he was a thief?"

"He did."

"And that his son murdered Mr. Richards?"

"He did."

"But does that seem reasonable? To you, I mean, to you?"

"It did not seem reasonable at the time, but such was the case."

Keeneyes smiled indulgently.

Edgar exclaimed with a flush, "Surely you do not doubt my——"

"Young man, you discourage me," cried Keeneyes. "What is the younger generation coming to? Why, don't you understand that that man whom you found entire in the closet, and only whose toe you found in the storeroom, was in reality our friend Richards who was hiding, in order for people to think that he was murdered?"

"Impossible!"

"And don't you see that he called himself John Gradge in order the better to incriminate young John Gradge, to excite the mob that much the more?"

"Sure!" cried out Brown.

Edgar gasped. It sounded reasonable.

"That is why Miss Richards laughed when you told her the story," said Keeneyes. "She knew her stepfather was hiding, pretending to have been murdered. She knew he was in the house. She knew it must have been he who, claiming to be the older John Gradge, confessed to ridiculous crimes, in order to stain the name of young John Gradge. Miss Richards saw through the trick, just as I have done. An intelligent young lady, that Miss Richards! I like her."

"I believe you are right," Edgar confessed.

"Oh, thank you, you overpower me," Keeneyes laughed. "Moreover, young John Gradge had been in the hands of the mob. They were about to hang him. His hands were tied behind his back. Perhaps Ballinger let him escape. I hope so. At any rate, young John did escape. He came to the deserted house, possibly not knowing that Miss Richards was a prisoner there. He ran into the rear bedroom.

"He found it empty.

"Why? Because Richards, growing hungry had slipped to the storeroom without taking the pains to dress. Young John saw the garments of his sweetheart's stepfather. His own clothes were in wretched condition from his flight through mud, rain and brambles. He washed himself, put on the other man's clothes, having first cut the rope from his wrists with a penknife. In doing so he cut his wrist. Hence the blood on the chair.

"Why this is all like a, b, c. Richards, hearing John Gradge in the rear room, would have fled upstairs, had you not been in the hall. As soon as Gradge was dressed, he went upstairs, rescued Miss Richards, brought her below, and while they were in the rear, Richards darted from the storeroom, and went upstairs. Those watchdogs were familiar with all these people, and let them pass at will.

"When you found Richards upstairs, as I have told you, he pretended to be the older John Gradge, in order to blacken the name of Gradge."

"This certainly sounds reasonable!" Edgar exclaimed, in amazement.

"Reasonable?" Keeneyes repeated, with a smile. "Do you suppose I would tell you anything that was not reasonable?"

"I really believe, now," Edgar exclaimed, speaking rather to himself than to his companions, "that it was Richards talking to me upstairs, and that in calling himself John Gradge, and in confessing himself to

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be a thief, he knew I was a stranger in the neighborhood and would think him John Gradge, and he wanted me to think as ill of this John Gradge as possible."

"Exactly. Have I not already explained this to you?"

"You have, and I believe you are right."

"You believe I am right," exclaimed Keeneyes somewhat impatiently. "Well, thank you! That is a recommendation!"

"But," said Edgar, "the mystery of the torn letter? How can you account for that?"

"State the facts," said Keeneyes, half closing his sharp gray eyes, and stretching his long thin legs out, till his feet touched Edgar under the table. Keeneyes had, indeed, assumed his professional attitude.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SOLVES EVERYTHING.

"Before I speak of the torn letter," said Edgar, "there is something I should like explained."

"I will explain it," said Keeneyes, confidently.

"In my desire to explore the upstairs rooms," said Edgar, "I found it impossible to go up the stairs, for the dogs would not permit it."

"Naturally."

"So I had to climb up a tree, fasten a rope to the chimney, and swing down to the upper window. The situation was as follows: I had the thief securely locked up in the storeroom—who, by the way, you convince me was not a thief, but really Mr. Richards."

"Well?"

"Shortly before I climbed the tree, and soon after I had talked to the mysterious bather in the rear bedroom, I heard a crash upstairs. Well, as I say, when I finally gained the upper floor, I found only the thief hiding in the closet, the thief who called himself John Gradge, Senior, but who you convince me was really this man Richards. He escaped from me, and when I got downstairs, whom did I find in the storeroom? Why, the young lady, whose presence in the house I had never suspected. In that room, I had left Richards locked up. In that room, I now found Miss Richards. What was the crash that I had heard upstairs? And how had Richards gotten upstairs? and where had the young lady come from? and what had become of the young man who had left bloodstains on the chair?"

"All this is exceedingly simple," returned Keeneyes. "Let me enumerate:

"First, the young lady was left upstairs, guarded by the dogs. The thief was in the storeroom. The young man, who was really young John Gradge, had just disappeared from the rear bedroom. You stood ready to climb the tree. Ballinger was away with the mob. That was the situation. Very good, indeed.

"Second: As to the crash, that was produced by young John Gradge gaining access to the second story, no doubt, by the very tree that later served you as a ladder. Up there he found his sweetheart. He brought her downstairs while you were climbing the tree, or thinking about it, or getting ready to do so. The young lady was on friendly terms with the dogs, and as soon as John had freed her from her bonds, whatever they were, she brought him down by the steps.

"Third: On reaching the hall, the young lady went at once to the storeroom, and unlocked the door, for she was hungry. But her sweetheart stopped her, to arrange their flight together. He took her to the rear to point out some spot in the scene whither he would ride with a led-horse. He told her to join him at that spot, as soon as she heard him galloping up. While they were thus talking and perchance," added Keeneyes, closing his eyes, "not without a tender kiss——"

"Ah!" sighed Edgar, dejectedly.

"I say," persisted Keeneyes, "while they were taking a last fond embrace, a last lingering kiss——"

"Please continue!" Edgar interposed.

"Very good. At this interesting time, the man you call the thief, that is, the man Richards, finding that his door had been unlocked, fled from the storeroom, undressed as he was, and darted upstairs, being not in the least afraid of the dogs, and, since he wished himself to be thought murdered, he hid in the closet. Just about that time, you arrived upstairs. You found him, and he called himself John Gradge, wishing, as I have said, for you to believe Miss Richards' stepfather a dead man.

"And lastly, when you got downstairs, Miss Richards had parted from her lover, and had gone into the storeroom to get something to eat."

"It must have been precisely so," Edgar declared, with such evident admiration, that even Keeneyes was satisfied.

"And now," said Keeneyes, "what about the torn letter mystery?"

"That, indeed, seemed to partake of the supernatural."

"Tell it to me, nevertheless, for my powers of interpretation are themselves what we might almost call supernatural," said Keeneyes, gravely.

"When I went into the kitchen," said Edgar, "to explore, after the disappearance of the young man of the mysterious voice, I found a waste-basket full of torn circulars; and, among the circulars were scraps of a letter. I hunted out these scraps and put them together, and began to read the letter."

"But tell me about the circulars," Keeneyes interrupted.

"Oh, the circulars were nothing," Edgar returned, rather impatiently. "They were all exactly alike—some sort of advertisement."

"There were several of them?"

"Yes, yes, a great many. Half a boxful in the storeroom, and as I told you, this scrap-basket full of them. But the letter——"

"But the circular," interposed Keeneyes. "Upon my word, I am ten times more interested in it, than in your letter."

"My dear Mr. Zellers," cried Edgar, "I am sorry I said anything about the circulars, for they have nothing to do with the letter. They were mere printed advertisements."

"But you say there was half a boxful in the storeroom?"

"Of course."

"And others in the kitchen?"

"Yes, yes, yes."

"And all of them precisely alike?"

"Certainly. All advertised something or other, and had been printed from the same type."

"Extraordinary!" cried Keeneyes. "What did they advertise?"

Edgar was out of patience. "My dear sir," he returned, "the advertisement had reference to some sort of entertainment, sleight-of-hand, or something of that sort. A preposterous name was repeated in big letters, such a name as no mortal ever bore except for fake entertainments. It was the same sort of advertisement that reads something like this: 'So-and-So will be in your town on such-and-such a date.'"

"And don't you remember what sort of an entertainment was advertised on these circulars?"

"It was a magician's, or sleight-of-hand, I believe."

"As a matter of fact," said Keeneyes, "was it not a hypnotist's advertisement?"

"Why, to be sure," said Edgar, remembering. "Yes, 'The world-famous Souwail, the hypnotist known from pole to pole,' or something like that."

"Ah, I now understand everything," said Keeneyes. "This villain, Ballinger, was a hypnotist, and naturally kept his advertising circulars in his own house. He had hypnotized Miss Richards, and it was in that manner that he had been able to keep her upstairs. The watchdogs were not to keep her up there, since she was evidently friendly with them, they were to keep strangers from going up there, and finding her in her trance. No wonder she was hungry! This is really admirable. She would know her stepfather had not been murdered, and it was necessary to keep her silent, else she would destroy the plot against her young lover. Excellent! So she was kept in a hypnotic trance, upstairs. When her lover found his way upstairs, he aroused her from her trance. Then she was hungry."

"This, if true," cried Edgar, "would explain her strange assertion that she had eaten nothing for eight days."

"She said that?"

"She did."

"My friend, you admit that my theory would account for her fast?"

"Of course it would account for it."

"Very good. But would any other theory account for her fast?"

"I could think of no other explanation."

"Therefore, there is no other explanation," said Keeneyes; "mark you, I do not say 'therefore' because you can think of no other explanation, but because I, myself, can think of no other. Therefore, this Ballinger was accustomed to giving hypnotic entertainments in the small mountain towns and villages. His power was, evidently, quite remarkable; and, for eight days he had kept Miss Richards in a trance, while he sought to accomplish the ruin of his rival. And now let us hear the mystery of the torn letter."

After a pause, during which Edgar was presumably admiring the penetration of the great detective, the young man resumed:

"Every word of that letter is engraved ineffaceably upon my memory. But it is not so strange about the words as about what happened when I read them."

"Pray inform me," said Keeneyes.

"When I had put the pieces together," said Edgar, "I read thus:

"'Dear Mr. Richards—Of course there will be a great noise——'"

"Well?"

"At that very moment," said Edgar, "came that crash from upstairs that you persuaded me was caused by young John Gradge, when he found his sweetheart in her trance. The noise indeed came, just as the letter said."

"But," said Keeneyes, "you don't imagine that the note caused the noise, do you?"

"To continue," Edgar evaded him, "at a later time, I started to read the letter anew, and when I had read the words, 'But even should my rival be hanged——'"

"Ah," said the detective, "this letter was written by Ballinger, and referred to John Gradge, and to the plot of arresting him for the murder of Richards, who, as we have seen, was not murdered at all."

"As soon as I read those words," said Edgar, impressively, "I heard the voices of the mob shouting, 'Hang him! hang him! hang him!'"

Edgar paused, and looked at Keeneyes.

"Is that all?" Keeneyes asked, imperturbably. "Have you finished your story?"

"Not quite. A third time I tried to read that magic letter, and I came to these words, 'Just one word more as to this disappearance——'"

"Well?"

"Just then I was interrupted, and I threw the bits of the letter by the edge of the front porch, where I could find them again when I came back."

"And when you came back——"

"The note had disappeared, just as the note had said."

"And do you think it disappeared because you read those words?"

"Of course not. But were not these remarkable coincidences?"

"They were. But they were only coincidences. I will present you with a phenomenon quite as remarkable," Keeneyes assured him.

"When?"

"Immediately, if you desire it."

"I wish you would," said Edgar with great interest.

Keeneyes lifted his hand, and for a moment there was silence.

Then the celebrated detective said, quietly, "Of course there will be a great noise——"

Scarcely had he finished, when a deafening crash resounded throughout the room.

At hearing the words of the mysterious letter repeated, with the precise result Edgar had witnessed in the deserted house, namely, with a tremendous crash as a sequel, the young man actually started up from the table, pale and troubled.

"Sit down, Beame," laughed his friend Brown, "a waiter has dropped a load of dishes, and broken everything. That is all."

Edgar looked, and saw that such was the case. Keeneyes smiled serenely.

"Did the noise follow my words?" asked Keeneyes.

"But how could you know it would do so?" Edgar stammered.

"I detected in the waiter's hurried movements and inconsiderate haste," said Keeneyes, "that he was about to drop his dishes. Everything can be explained."

"Provided," said Brown admiringly, "there is a Keeneyes present to present the explanation."

"Of that I am now convinced," cried Edgar, laughing at his recent uneasiness. "And I find myself indeed happy, Mr. Zellers, to have met you, and to have heard you so marvelously fathom what to me was entirely inexplicable."

"Pooh!" said Keeneyes, who, despite his seeming nonchalance, was, in fact, a good deal pleased over his achievement. "I should like to tell you, since you seem a most sensible young man, of one of my solutions which really called forth all my genius."

"And I should like to hear it," said Edgar.

"The only clew in my possession," said Keeneyes, "was a broomstraw."

"A broomstraw?"

"Exactly. You know what I mean, of course. A straw that had become detached from the sweeping-end of the broom; the end, mark you, that rests upon the carpet when the maid sweeps the room. The heavy end, in fact. The end that looks like a miniature haystack——"

"Yes, yes," interposed Edgar, "I quite understand you."

"I am glad," said Keeneyes, with apparent relief, "not to be obliged to explain what I mean, at more length. Well, I had only a broomstraw to guide me in a most mysterious murder case—not a case like yours, where a man pretended to be murdered; far otherwise."

"Tell it to us, over our cigars," cried Brown.

"Yes, do so," Edgar Beame urged. "I shall not be surprised at any feat of your penetration, that has given you the name of Keeneyes; for I am convinced that your solution is the correct one to the mystery of the deserted house."

The end.

Too Much of a Bath.

They take boarders out at Doctor Jones', and among them are Messrs. Tyson and Botts, two young men who are engaged in business in the city.

One day last July, after supper, Tyson and Botts went down to the creek to take a swim. As soon as they left the house, two or three of the other fellows hinted that it would be a good joke for two of them to dress in women's clothes and go over and scare Tyson and Botts.

So several of them borrowed some skirts, and hats, and other female fixings, and, after assuming them, started toward the creek.

The two swimmers saw them coming and began to paddle upstream to get out of their way. The female figures came nearer, and took seats on the bank of the stream, so close to the clothes of the swimmers that there was no chance at all for Tyson and Botts to sneak out and dress themselves hurriedly. And the supposed women sat there in the most aggravating manner, while Tyson and Botts stayed in the water shivering.

Presently they got up to go, the swimmers thought; but, to the horror of the latter, they perceived the women get into the boat and begin to paddle upstream. They went very slowly, and so Tyson and Botts had time enough to swim farther up in order to get out of the way.

The boat followed them up for about a mile, and then Tyson concluded to do something to explain the situation to the ladies. He was beginning to feel sick.

Accordingly he shouted at the top of his voice, and Botts shouted; but those idiotic women still continued to pull upstream. The swimmers were almost crazy, and at last they made a dash for the bank and hid behind the bushes.

Then the women in the boat turned round and began to row down the stream. Botts and Tyson got in the water again and swam after the boat. The women landed close by their clothes, and, to the amazement of the swimmers, picked them up and began to walk off with them. Then Tyson and Botts became excited, and swam in close to the shore to hulloa at the women, and then the women began to laugh, and the victims of the joke saw just how it was.

When they emerged from the water they didn't join in the merriment. They seemed gloomy and sad. As soon as Botts got his shirt on he went up to Peters and shook his fist under his nose, and said

"You red-headed idiot. I've got a notion to bang the liver out of you! Oh, you may laugh, but if you ever try any of your jokes on me again I'll murder you! Now, you mind me!"

Tyson and Botts will board elsewhere next summer.

His Apprehension.

A genial Joshua, who runs a chicken plantation and cornstalk refinery down in the Salem county section of Jersey, came to Philadelphia the other day to buy a pair of winter boots and a box of axle grease. After rambling around in the ferry zone for a while he bravely cut loose and started up Market street.

He had not proceeded far when he saw an employe of the Philadelphia electric company lift the lid of a manhole and crawl down into the conduit chamber. Evdently the sight filled Joshua with much thought, for he gazed earnestly toward the manhole for a minute or two and then went over to a cop who was holding fast to a sunny spot on the corner.

"Excuse me, constable," said Joshua, addressing the police person, "but hain't they got a railroad down in the ground under this street?"

"They certainly have," indulgently answered the officer. "It is the subway."

"That's what they told me," responded the farmer, with another glance toward the center of the street, "but I' hain't never seen it. Howsomever, I jes' seen a feller crawlin' down ter ketch a train, an' sez I to meself, them holes may be all right for ther men passengers, but they must be mighty derned onconvenient fer the women folks."

* * *

Training carrier pigeons has long been a hobby with Doctor Neubronner, of Cronberg, Germany. His father, years ago, used the birds to bring prescriptions to his pharmacy from near-by places but the son has discovered a new use for them. He has constructed a camera which weighs about seventy-five grammes, which the pigeon carries on its flight. By means of clockwork and an automatic shutter negatives are made of objects on the way, some of which are highly interesting.

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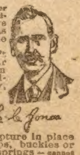

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"Find no trace of oil. You have struck paregoric."

Mistook His Meaning.

Mr. Recentmarrie—Why have you made this bread with a hole through it, like a doughnut, dearest?

Mrs. Recentmarrie—Why, it's the kind you asked me to make, John; don't you remember saying you wished I would try my luck with hole wheat bread?

The Beggar Part.

"Your wife looks charming tonight, Mr. Blinkers," remarked the hostess at the reception. "Her new costume simply beggars description."

"Well, I don't know as to that," rejoined Blinkers, "but it almost beggared me."

Foolish Question.

Little Remus—Mammy, where do all de ol' broomsticks go to?

Mammy Chloe—Hesh askin' sech foolish questions, chile, en read yo' dream book. Yo' know de witches ride away on dem.

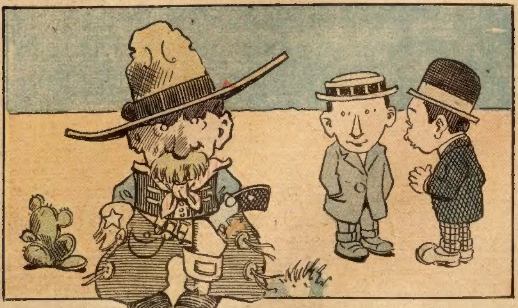
Natural-Born Fan.

"That boy of mine," said Nupopp, proudly, "is going to be a great baseball enthusiast some day."

"I'd like to know how you can tell," rejoined his friend Bleecher. "He's only 2 weeks old."

"Yes," said Nupopp, "but he can yell louder than any chap of his age and weight I ever saw."

AT TOO CLOSE A RANGE.



Percy—Well, why don't you call him a liar?
Harold—There isn't any phone around here.

Superfluous Question.

The specialist had sounded the lungs of the man from St. Louis and collected $10 from him, when he asked:

"Do you always sleep with your windows wide open, sir?"

The patient looked bored. "Didn't I tell you I was from St. Louis?" he said with irritation.

"You did, certainly, sir," acknowledged the puzzled physician, "but I don't see what that has to do with my question."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the sick man. "Do you mean to say you're not posted enough to know that everything in St. Louis is wide open?"

Doing His Duty.

The farmer marched into the little grocer's shop with a firm step. "I want that tub of butter," he said, "and that lot of sugar and all that other stuff."

"Good gracious!" said the widow who kept the shop. "Whatever do you want with all them goods?"

"I dunno," said the farmer, scratching his head, "but, you see, I'm the executor of your husband's will, and the lawyers told me I was to carry out the provisions."

Their Obvious Purpose.

"J'ine hands!" solemnly said good old Parson Bagster. "Does you, Claud Eefaw, take dis yuh woman, Gladys Lorena Bulginback, to be yo' lawful wedded wife, for better or for wuss, to love and churish, th'oo good and evil repo't? Does yo——"

"Cou'se I does, sah!" a trifle impatiently interrupted the groom. "Do yo' 'magine dat me and dis lady come yuh to pose for a movin'-picture act?"

Index of Time.

Professor—Historically speaking, which is the older bird—the dove or the stork?

Student—I have never given the matter a thought, professor, but judging from the comparative length of their legs, I have no hesitancy in saying that the stork is of longer standing.

A Hint for Silence.

"Why do they say, 'As smart as a steel trap'?" asked the talkative boarder. "I never could see anything particularly intellectual about a steel trap."

"A steel trap is called smart," explained the elderly person, in his sweetest voice, "because it knows exactly the right time to shut up."

More might have been said, but in the circumstances it would have seemed unfitting.

"Tell It to the Marines."

Little Willie—Say, pa, what are marines?

Pa—Marines, my son, are soldiers on shipboard.

Little Willie—What are they for, pa?

Pa—People use 'em to tell lies to, my son.

An Impossibility.

Col. O'Brien—There's no use trying to get Patterly to join the Democratic ranks. He says he is, always was, and always will be a straight Republican.

Maj. Bourbon—A straight Republican! Great Scott, there's no such combination!

Unlucky Absent-Mindedness.

Nora—I don't see why Sally refused Mr. Getler. She always seemed to be so very fond of him.

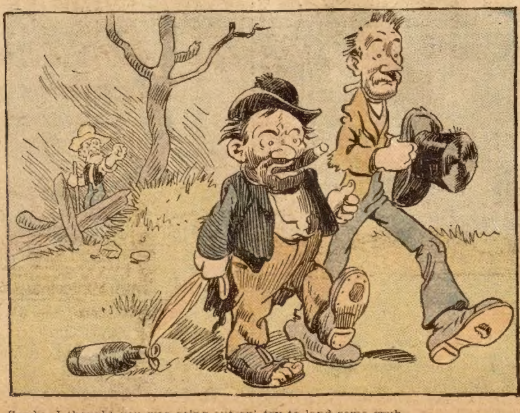
Nellie—Yes, but she couldn't stand his absent-mindedness; he proposed to her by telegraph and sent the message "collect."

Unfortunate Experience.

"What's the matter, dear?" queried Mrs. Owl, as the other half of the family appeared at their hollow tree apartments minus half his feathers. "Been fighting?"

"Not any," growled Mr. Owl in reply. "I got tangled up in a wireless message."

REVERSED.



Sandy—I thought you was going out an' try to land some grub.
Gritty—I did; but de farmer gave me a grubbin' hoe an' made me grub de land.

A Valuable Instrument.

Mrs. Hayrix—Fer th' land's sake, Hiram, what be that air contrapshun?

Hayrix—It's a present our boy, John, sent us from th city, Hanner. He writ on a card it wuz a barometer.

Mrs. Hayrix—Oh, I've heerd tell uv them things. I wunder which way yew screw th' thing when yew want it t' rain?

WHY SHE LOST OUT.

Said a spinster: "I think it is funny
That no man ever called me his honey."
Said a friend: "On my word,
This would not have occurred
If you had a great pile of money."

Exception to the Rule.

Poet—Have you noticed that long hair makes a man look intellectual?

Hearer—Yes, unless it is a long hair that his wife finds on his shoulders. Then it makes him look foolish.

An Unpopular Fashion.

"It says here that men are goin' ter wear clothes ter match th' hair next winter."

"That's goin' ter make it kind of cold fur th' bald-headed fellers, ain't it?"

No, Never!

Church—Even forgetful men are peculiar.

Gotham—What now?

"Why, you often see one who has forgotten to take the price mark off a new suit of clothes."

"Oh, yes, frequently."

"But you never did see one who forgot to take the price mark off the engagement ring he gave to a girl."

Unnecessary Precautions.

Ashley—There wouldn't be many fires if everybody dreaded them as much as Putought.

Seymour—What has Putought been doing now?

Ashley—Why, he had an automatic sprinkler erected on the ceiling above his wife's fireless cooker.

Quiet Preferred.

He—Why don't you approve of dancing?

She—Because it's mere hugging set to music.

He—Well, what is there about that you don't like?

She—The music.

A MISER.

Although his back is bent with age
And dirty is his collar '
He's faithful to his early love,
The lady on the dollar.

Explained.

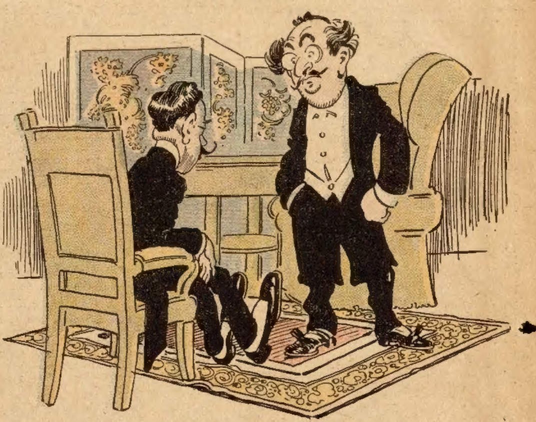
The Doctor—If it were merely a war of words how did you get your nose smashed?

The Patient—We were throwing unabridged dictionaries at each other.

THE TEST.

No better test of Love I know
Than that young heart which throbs
With love while his sweetheart doth eat
Sweet corn from off the cobs.

CRUEL.



Signor Screecherino—I flatter myself I have a veree fine voice, yes?
Barytone—It should be fine. You strain it enough.

Traits of Human Beings.

Side by side they sat by the seaside.

"The ocean waves remind me of human beings," he said.

"How's that?" she queried.

"They come to the shore in great style," he replied, "and go away broke."

A Cut-Rate Job.

Giles—Say, you didn't get your hair cut at a barber shop, did you?

Miles—Of course not. A locksmith did the job.

Giles—Huh! It looks more like the work of a hackman.

Labor Saving.

Gearing—What inventions is Dabster interested in?

Levere—The kind that will save him work. At the present time he is trying to devise an apparatus that will push his electric button.

A Safe Play.

"If you were a Congressman what would you do?"

"Dispose of my interests in the forest reservation and retire."

Butcher Has a Kick.

There are many ups and downs these days
Along in butcher town;
The higher mutton chops go up
The less of them go down.

Good Advice.

Jack—I had proposed and been accepted when the lights suddenly went out.

Dick—What did she do?

Jack—Suggested that we keep it dark.

The Modern Way.

"Has he asked your parents for your hand yet?"

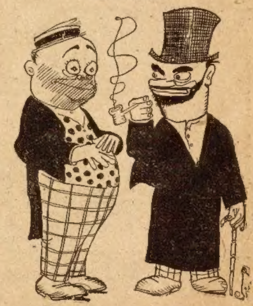
"My, no. That's an old-fashioned custom that's no longer observed. My father may consider himself lucky if we decide to send him an invitation to our wedding."

A Theory.

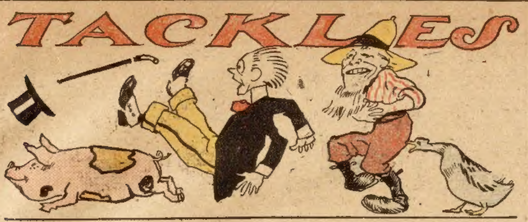
"Infant prodigies are hard to understand," said the man who is easily impressed.

"I don't think so," replied Miss Cayenne. "As a rule they are simply young people with highly imaginative parents."

His Route.



Windy Rivers—Yep; maybe yer didn't know dat I wunst run a business of me own.
Rippan Snort—So? An' where did yer run dis business?
Windy Rivers—Inter de ground.



Too Monotonous.

Mrs. Wedderly—Dinner will be late tonight, John. I had to discharge the new cook because of the dreadful language she uesd.

Wedderly—What kind did she use?

Mrs. Wedderly—Oh, the kind you let out when you get a bill from my dressmaker.

The Woman of It.

Edyth—I learned a great secret last night.

Mayme—Indeed!

Edyth—Yes; and I promised on my honor not to tell.

Mayme—Well, go ahead; I'm not too busy to listen.

What He Wanted.

Guest (in restaurant)—You may bring me a spiritualist steak.

Waiter—Beg pardon, sir?

Guest—A spiritualist steak—medium. See?

Not a Life of Ease.

Mrs. Allcash—Poor fellow; since I divorced him he has looked so dejected.

Mrs. Bigbrain—No wonder; he has to work for a living now.

One Man's Wisdom.

Newed—I inserted an advertisement for a plain cook last week and there wasn't a single applicant showed up.

Oldwed—How did you word it?

Newed—"Wanted—A plain cook."

Oldwed—Huh! No wonder your advertisement didn't pull. Try something like this: "Wanted—A refined young lady to do plain cooking," and you'll have a hundred applicants for the job.

Escape Too Easy.

Landlord—What's that up there, sir?

New Arrival—It's my airship; there's no suitable shelter for it about here, so I'm obliged to keep it flying up there—see?

Landlord—Yes, I see. My terms for guests with airships are cash in advance.

By Degrees.

The Lawyer—Will you tell the truth in answer to this question?

The Witness—I sure will.

The Lawyer—What have you been telling during the last fifteen minutes?

The Witness—Jest been workin' up to it!

His Choice.

Judge—You are privileged to challenge any member of the jury now being impaneled.

"Well, then, yer honor, Oi'll foight the shmall mon wid wan eye, in the corner, tnere fernist yez."

Cold Calculation.

"Going to take summer boarders this year?"

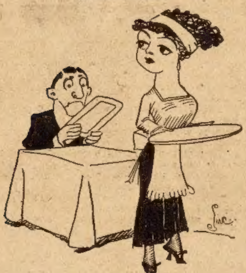
"Yep," answered Farmer Corntossel. "We don't need the money, but it's a good idea to have a lot o' folks around to share the mosquito bites and lower the average."

We Have Ideals.

"Are we merely a nation of money-getters?"

"Far from it, my boy. The mad rush for wealth is quite offset by the mad rush for the ball park."

Real Rude.



Pretty Waitress—Only the brave deserve the fair.

Crabbed Patron—H'm! Only the brave would eat such fare as you have here.

A Defensive Alliance.

"I've just been given a terrible licking," said the postage stamp.

"So have I," rejoined the envelope, "but if we stick together we'll manage to get through all right."

And Such Is Fame.

Mrs. Bluehose—Your new boarder is literary, I am told.

Mrs. Malaprop—Yes, indeed! Why, with his books and papers he litters his room worse than any boarder I ever had.

Retort Courteous.

First Stranger—I understand you are from Boston—the city of beans?

Second Stranger—Yes; and you, I believe, are from Philadelphia—the city of hasbeens.

Fish for Them.

Mrs. Farmer—Those ducks have stolen their nests. I haven't found any eggs in a long time.

Bobbie Farmer—Perhaps they laid 'em while they was swimmin', mamma!

TAKE WARNING.

He was a great glutton
On mutton chops, but—
He ate so much mutton
They called him a mutt.

A Bad One.

Waiter—Everything here is cooked by electricity, sir.

Customer—Well, take this egg away. It shocks me.

Not Prepaid.

He—Would that I could adequately express my love for you.

She—I suppose you haven't the money to pay the expressman.

Sure Sign.

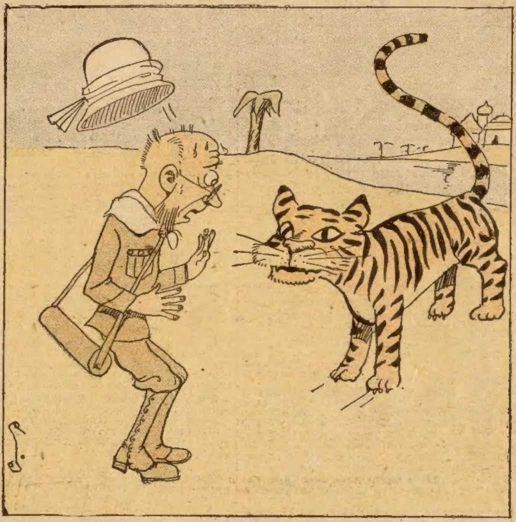
Miles—I understand you are superstitious—believe in signs and all that?

Giles—Yes, to a limited extent.

Miles—Well, what is it a sign of when you meet a man wearing a shirt and cuffs of different patterns?

Giles—It's a sign that his wife is away from home.

ACTUAL PROBABILITY.



The Professor—Dear me, can this be real or is it my imagination?
The Tige—If it is the latter you will be carried away by your imagination.

On Different Scales.

Blox—There goes Skinny Windham. What do you suppose he weighs?

Knox—Weighed in his own balance he probably weighs a ton; on ordinary stock scales he would weigh about 110 pounds and in the estimation of his neighbors he might possibly weigh eight ounces.

Up Against It.

Citizen—Why don't you go to work?

Tramp—Don't have to. The world owes me a living.

Citizen—Then why don't you collect it?

Tramp—Can't. The world has too many preferred creditors.

Still Undecided.

"By the way," queried the near-sport, "who is the light-weight champion of America?"

"It is still a matter of doubt," answered the wise guy. "Some claim the title for the coal dealer, while others say the iceman is entitled to it."

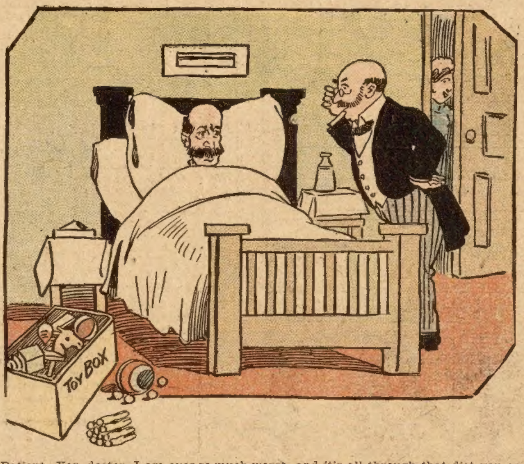
Didn't Recognize It.

Miss Fitz—Queer thing about the French people.

Mr. Carr—What's queer about them?

Miss Fitz—Why, when I was in Paris last summer I couldn't even make them understand their own language.

SICKER THAN EVER.

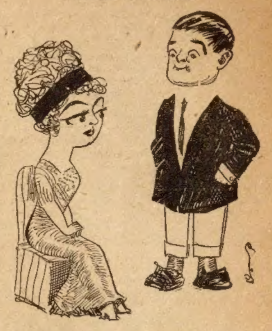


Patient—Yes, doctor, I am ever so much worse, and it's all through that diet you ordered!

Doctor—Impossible, man! I told you to confine yourself to such foods as would be taken by a 3-year-old child.

Patient—Well, didn't I follow your orders? During the past twenty-four hours, doctor, I have consumed two sticks of firewood, three applecores, fourteen ends of burnt matches, numberless strips of potato parings, three pieces of coal and two dozen boot buttons.

First in Line.



Geraldine—Aren't you willing to wait for me?

Gerald—Yes, if I may be the head waiter.

An Improvement.

"I suppose," said the party with the butt-in habit, "that you are bringing up your children to follow in your footsteps?"

"Not me," replied the fond parent. "I'm making a strenuous effort to bring them up in the way I should have gone."

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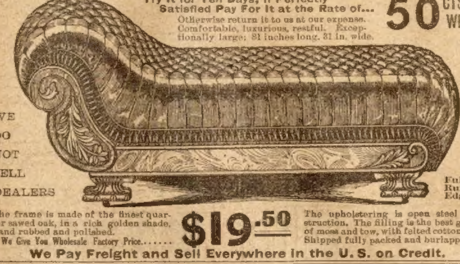

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WATCHING FOR HIM.

She sat gazing longingly out upon the ocean. A crowd of joyous children passed near her, filling the air with their merry laughter; yet she heard them not, but sat with her eyes riveted upon the waste of waters before her.

The incoming waves dashed upon the beach, and rolled back, as though affrighted, to the bosom of mother ocean, amid the cries of the rollicking bathers, but she was deaf to all her surroundings. Her eyes never wandered, but were concentrated at a point beyond, where sky and ocean seemed united.

A wealth of snow-white hair adorned her shapely head, a pair of gold-brimmed eyeglasses were poised upon her aquiline nose, while her classic features might have served as a model for a sculptor. A form that was tall and queenly added its attractiveness to one who could not fail to attract even the ordinary observer.

Many persons stood aloof and gazed sorrowfully at her, and but few in number were they who passed her that day but recognized in the impassive features of the lady the well-known comedienne of other days, Mademoiselle Victoire, of the Theater Francais.

None approached her. None spoke to her. Her silent sorrow was known, and her desire for solitude was respected. Many remembered the days which were now but shadows of the dead past, when Mademoiselle Victoire was the reigning belle of Paris, with the city at her feet. They recalled the birdlike notes of her sweetest songs, the resonant laughter and wild applause that rewarded her incomparable efforts.

The day waned. Night dropped its curtains upon the earth. Darkness covered the face of the ocean, and when stars began to appear Mademoiselle Victoire arose slowly from her seat and sought her apartments in an adjoining hotel, with some such feeling as one experiences who leaves the grave in which lies buried all his fondest hopes.

For many years Mademoiselle Victoire had sought the seaside, always arriving the first day of the season, and never taking her departure until the season closed. She always occupied the same seat, one affording an unobstructed view of the great ocean beyond, and no one ever contested her right to it. Mademoiselle Victoire's seat at the seaside was considered sacred property.

Forty years ago Paris was filled with tourists from every part of the habitable globe. The hotels were crowded to their utmost capacity, and the theaters were patronized in a manner that filled the coffers of the managers as they were never filled before. But while all prospered, the Theatre Francais was nightly crowded with enthusiastic and delighted audiences, who had assembled to do honor to that bright particular star of Paris, Mademoiselle Victoire.

Night after night the regular habitues noticed the presence of a young English gentleman, who applauded the best efforts of the artist with unwonted enthusiasm, and rewarded her with floral tributes ordered from the best florists in Paris. They were always graciously received, and it began to be whispered among the knowing ones that he was the accepted suitor of Mademoiselle Victoire.

It was Charles Northcote, the eldest son of the late Lord Northcote, who would, within the year, succeed to the title and estates of his father. He had gone to travel on the Continent during his college vacation, had seen and admired Mademoiselle Victoire, and, much to the surprise of Lady Northcote, he had remained in the capital of France.

An introduction to the lady was secured; his affection was reciprocated, and before the close of the season they were deeply in love with each other. Charles Northcote was the acknowledged escort of Mademoiselle Victoire. He brought her to the theater night after night to receive the plaudits of her entranced audiences, and he returned with her to the door of her mansion after the performance had ended.

The character of Mademoiselle Victoire was purity itself. Her name everywhere commanded respect, and she was idolized as one who would elevate the profession she had espoused to a higher and nobler standard.

"What is the matter with Mademoiselle Victoire tonight?" asked one of the habitues of the Theatre Francais of the manager, Jean Carton, a few weeks after the acceptance of Charles Northcote as her suitor.

"Matter?" replied the manager, shrugging his shoulders. "Her inspiration has gone."

"Inspiration gone?" exclaimed the habitue.

"Yes, sir. Charles Northcote. He was her inspiration. She never sang so well as when he was in the private box listening to her wonderful voice. He has been absent for several days."

"Will he not return? Has he proven false to her?" inquired the Frenchman, with angry eyes.

"No, monsieur. They loved each other truly. No one could love Mademoiselle Victoire, and prove false. That is impossible. There is such a wealth of affection centered in her heart that the man upon whom she bestows it could not prove dishonorable."

"But she is so sad tonight," said the Frenchman.

"That is exactly what I fear," replied Jean Carton, while an expression of anxiety flitted across his handsome features. "Her spirits are undoubtedly seriously affected; she merely sings mechanically. The life of her song is gone; she is like a soulless machine, where once was joyousness, esprit, vim, there is now lassitude, soullessness, indifference."

"But this will not continue."

"That's what I fear," replied Jean Carton. "I have watched her narrowly for several nights past. She loses power every day, and no longer arouses the audience to the old pitch of enthusiasm. Her sorrow grows upon her, and I fear it will resolve itself into a settled gloom."

"She has a sorrow, then?" inquired the Frenchman.

"A deep-rooted sorrow, I suspect. See, monsieur, how her eyes wander toward that empty box. That is the one which Charles Northcote occupied when he was in Paris. How beautifully she sings, but yet you can see that her heart is far away. I must reason with her. Unless she can conquer her heart, we will be ruined," said Jean Carton.

When the manager returned to his office he found the maid of Mademoiselle Victoire awaiting his arrival.

"Monsier Carton, I have been requested by Mademoiselle Victoire to ask an interview with you after the performance this evening," said the maid.

"Certainly," replied Jean Carton. "I can refuse Mademoiselle Victoire nothing. Shall I call upon her?"

"She will call upon you here, if there is no objection," replied the maid.

"Very well. Tell your mistress I shall await her here," replied Jean Carton affably.

The performance drew to a close, the curtain fell upon the last act, and, after several recalls of Mademoiselle Victoire, the audience slowly dispersed, not, however, without a tinge of disappointment at the change which was apparent in the artiste, and for which they were unable satisfactorily to account.

After she had donned her street dress, Mademoiselle Victoire hastened to the office of the manager. As she entered he arose and politely received her.

"Monsieur Carton," she said, after a painful pause, "I have called to have my engagement canceled."

"Your engagement canceled?" exclaimed Jean Carton. "Mademoiselle, you do not mean that?"

"I can no longer sing," said Mademoiselle Victoire sadly.

"But you sang tonight, mademoiselle."

"I uttered the notes, Monsieur Carton, but I did not sing. Music comes from the soul. My soul is crushed."

"But, mademoiselle, this is merely a transitory feeling. It will pass away, and you will again hold Paris in a transport of adoration at your feet."

"Can a bird sing that has lost its mate?" inquired Mademoiselle Victoire sadly.

"When the mate returns it will sing sweeter than ever, for it then pours from its throat notes of gladness and thanksgiving," replied Jean Carton.

"And so will I, when Charles Northcote returns," replied Mademoiselle Victoire. "They have robbed me of him. They have sent him to foreign lands, that I may not see him. My heart is gone with him, Monsieur Carton. His mother heard of our engagement, and has set her face against it. His guardian called upon me and spoke of our union as one that would degrade their family. I am an artiste, Monsieur Carton. Is there anything degrading in art? Is not my character as spotless as that of Lady Northcote?"

"I will challenge his guardian," exclaimed Jean Carton, as he jumped to his feet excitedly, and rapidly paced the floor of his office.

"You cannot. He has embarked with his ward for America. They go to the plains, where they will spend the autumn months," replied Mademoiselle Victoire.

"But what did Charles Northcote say to this?" inquired Jean Carton.

"He swore to be faithful to his love. He begged me to be brave and faithful to him, and he would return and claim me in spite of all the world. We parted. The wide ocean will soon roll between us. Why did they part us? No love was holier than ours," said Mademoiselle Victoire.

Jean Carton continued to pace the floor of his office immersed in deep thought. He knew if he held Mademoiselle Victoire to her engagement in her despondent mood, it would not only injure her professional reputation, but would entail serious losses upon him. He calmly reasoned as to the best course of procedure.

"I cannot grant what you desire, Mademoiselle Victoire. It is impossible to cancel the engagement. You need rest and relaxation, however, and I will willingly grant you a leave of absence. How long before you expect Charles Northcote to return?"

"In three months."

"Three months' leave of absence is then granted to you. You will sing tomorrow night, Mademoiselle Victoire, and after tomorrow night I will substitute Madame Voillant in the part."

"Degrading!" exclaimed Jean Carton, when Mademoiselle Victoire had taken her departure, and left him alone in his office. "Degrading! If I had known of it sooner I should have challenged that insulting guardian and wiped the insult out with his heart's blood!"

* * * * *

Forty years had passed and gone since the interview between Jean Carton and Mademoiselle Victoire in the Theatre Francais. The former had become a gray-haired old man of seventy-five.

"Ah, Monsieur Carton," said a friend who met him by the seaside. "Come down to enjoy the invigorating breeze of the ocean, eh? Our old friend, Mademoiselle Victoire, is here, too. There she sits yonder, watching the waves of the ocean the same as ever."

"Yes," replied Jean Carton sadly; "watching for what will never come."

"You know her story, then, Monsieur Carton?"

"Yes. She was engaged to the son of an English nobleman. His mother heard of it, and sent him to America, hoping that the separation would cure their love. It but increased it. He was returning to fulfill his promise to her, but the steamer was never heard of after. Lost, and not a soul escaped to tell the tale!"

"And she is watching for him?"

"For forty years she has visited this seaside resort, as you see her now, watching for the return of her lover who will never come."

Pickled Peppers

On'y Wanted His Consent.

He was well dressed and breezy and when he entered the private office of the great tea merchant he looked capable of doing anything from selling books to writing up insurance.

"I have come, sir," he announced without hesitation, "to get your consent——"

'Consent for what?" demanded the old man without looking up.

"Well—er—you see, your daughter——"

"Oh, I understand now. So you like my daughter, eh?"

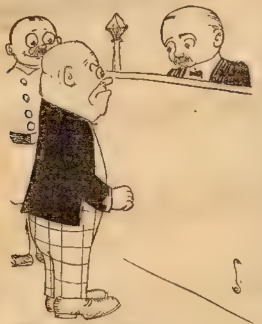
"I think she is the finest young woman I have met in many moons. As I was saying if you will give your consent she will have the handsomest——"

"Come! Come! Don't get vain and say she'll have the finest husband if she accepts you."

"I'm married, sir. I'm trying to tell you that if you give your consent she'll have the handsomest auto runabout in town. She's dead stuck on it and if you'll consent and put up one thousand cash we will——"

But the great tea merchant had collapsed.

His Greatest Worry.



Justice—Three months for you my man
Lugubrious Luke—Aw, just me luck and I'd jest paid 15 cents fer a hair-cut yesterday.

Applies the Scriptures.

A teacher in a downtown Sunday school was so proud of her flock that she invited several visiting ministers and elders to attend one of her classes and be encouraged and uplifted by the observation of juvenile proficiency in scriptural studies.

The session opened auspiciously. Little girls with yellow plaits and little girls with black braids lisped their response in a manner to gladden the heart of any teacher of "young ideas." Then came the fall which invariably follows pride.

Turning to a bullet-headed, freckled-faced little boy, whose ears seemed about to carry off his head like an aeroplane, she asked him to repeat a verse from the Scripture, but her only answer was a vacant stare.

"Come, come," said the teacher, "do you mean to tell me that you can't repeat even one verse?"

"Naw," replied the small boy. "I know one."

"Well, then let me have it," said the teacher sharply.

"And Judas went out and hanged himself," repeated the young unregenerate. His teacher's lips wreathed themselves in a cynical smile as she said, "Very good, and can you give me another?" The boy nodded vigorously.

"Sure," he replied.

"Let me have it then," responded his teacher in her softest, purring tones.

To her consternation the little reprobate said, "Go thou and do likewise." He enjoyed a holiday the rest of that afternoon.

Slight Change.

A Sunday school teacher shipped a chair to a little girl by freight. When it arrived it was badly broken, owing to the carelessness of the brakemen on the train.

Hearing of this the lady immediately shipped another chair, and used all the eloquence possible when addressing the representatives of the railroad on the subject. She drew a pathetic picture of the disappointed child, and suggested a notation like this: "Do not break this chair, or you will break a little girl's heart."

A very determined employe agreed to fix it up. He did. The chair arrived in perfect condition, bearing this inscription:

"The lady says if any damn brakeman busts this chair there will certainly be hell a-poppin'."

Frenzied Finance.

Harker—Your daughter's musical education must cost you a lot of money?

Homer—Yes, but the man who formerly lived next door is paying for it.

Harker—How's that?

Homer—I had been trying for years to purchase his property, but was unable to do so until my daughter had been practicing on the piano for a month, then I got the property for half price.

Out of a Job.

"Is there any idle curiosity around here?" asked the newcomer in the small village.

"One," chuckled the oldest inhabitant, pointing to a little house on the hill. "The circus fat lady lives there and she hasn't been showing around for two years. I calculate she's an idle curiosity."

Good Day for Wars.

There was nothing in sight down the road. The major sat tilted against the wall of the general store, reading yesterday's paper. It was a clear, warm day. Inside the store the postmaster could be heard sorting the mail, but without everything was still and peaceful. At last there was a clatter and a rattle, and from somewhere there appeared a negro driving an unpainted wagon drawn by a mule. He drew up with a loud whoa in front of the store.

"Major!" he called.

No response.

"Major! Doan' wan' ter 'sturb yo', major."

No response.

"Major!"

The major heard at last.

"Hello, uncle!" he said. "What can I do for you?"

"Doan' wan' ter 'sturb yo', major, but is dey any news in de paper?"

"No," said the major, "no, there isn't any news today. Yes, there is, too. There's a war between France and Morocco."

"'S dat so?" said the negro. "'S dat so, an' is dere really a wah, with fightin' an' blood-killin'?"

"A real war," repeated the major.

"Golly!" said the negro, gathering up his reins. "Whar did yo' say dat wah was, major."

"Morocco," said the major, turning again to the sheet.

"Well," said the colored man, "dey suttenly has got a fine day for it. Giddap!" And he clattered down the road.

His Error.

The young man who loved the daughter of the widow had been called to get the mother's consent to lead the fair girl to the altar, but he blundered at the very outset.

"I have come, madam," he began in a voice that was agitated and beseeching, "to ask you for the blessed privilege of working for your dear daughter, taking care of her, giving her a home, and——"

He got no further. The widow, with indescribable eagerness, threw himself into the arms. "I gladly give you the privilege," she cried. "You don't know how I have hoped and longed for a model man like you to be my darling daughter's father!"

Should Take the Tip.

"Yes, John," remarked Mrs. Stubb, who was glancing over the sporting page out of curiosity, "when the baseball players start to practice they go hundreds of miles from home."

"Oh, if the piano players would only do the same!" sighed Mr. Stubbs, as the young woman in the next flat started to hammer out the latest waltz for the twentieth time that day.

Soft Landing.

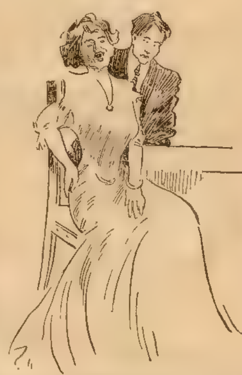
It was in 1920 and tramps were riding on the bumpers of airships.

"Boss," said the dusty pilgrim of the clouds, if yer must t'row me off, would yer mind doing me one favor"'

"And what is that?" asked the aerial brakeman, gruffly.

"Why, drop me down on top of dat farmhouse shed where all dem rows of apple pies are cooling."

Logic.



Henri—You make me lead a dog's life, Lucille. You will not even press my pants.
His Wife—Ha, ha! Who ever heard of a dog having his pants pressed, Henri?

TOO POETICAL FOR HER.

"Meat prices do not bother me,"
Said the bard in lofty tone;
"As long as my muse is running free
I'll live on oats alone."
"Alone, indeed," replied the lass,
The one he was to wed;
"I like beefsteak, and you I'll pass
For a butcher's clerk instead."

His Punishment.

"See here," exclaimed the fair maid, angrily, "this is the third time you have proposed to me. Didn't I tell you the last time not to do it again?"

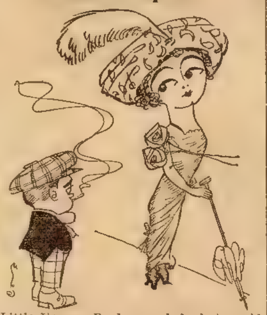
"Y-yes, I b-believe you did," stammered the persistent young man in the parlor scene. "But I—er—forgot."

"Oh, you forgot, eh?" she sneered. "Well, I'm going to teach you a lesson that you won't forget soon. You have proposed to me for the last time."

"Why," he queried, after the manner of his kind, "what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to accept you," she replied. "That's what I'm going to do."

Modest Request.



Little Jimmy—Pardon me, lady, but would yer mind walkin' down de street wid me? Cause I'm on de outs wid me goil and I wanter git her jealous.

Charitable.

"Why are you so sad, my poor man?" asked the housewife, pausing a moment from her house-cleaning.

"Ah, mum," sighed the tired tramp, "I can't help being sad when I think of dis cold, cold world. I asked de woman down de street for a night's lodging, and she says I could sleep in her bin of anthracite. You wouldn't be so cruel, would you, mum!"

"No, indeed, my poor man. If you will shake these two rugs I'll let you sleep in my bituminous bin. That is soft coal, you know."

The Usual Sequel.

When they reached Montreal on their elopement Chicago seemed far, far away and they were both homesick.

"I will just telegraph the letter 'F' to father," said the beautiful bride. "That will mean forgiveness."

"Better make it two 'F's,'" advised the young bridegroom.

"Gracious, dear! And what will two 'F's' mean?"

"Why, 'forgiveness and funds.'"

Tonsorial and Marine.

"I noticed as I was coming into your shop," remarked the stranger in the barber's chair, "that your sign indicated that you were both a 'tonsorial' and 'marine' artist. Now, what in thunder do you mean to convey by that word 'marine'?"

"I wish to convey, sah," answered the razor-wielder, speaking with an air of dignity that even President Taft seldom emulates, "I mean to convey, sah, that I am de champ'on expert foh putting on de sea foam, sah."

SYNONYMOUS.

"Pardon me," said the young man from New York, "but may I inquire what kind of dog that is?'

"Certainly," replied the Boston maid. "He is an expectorator."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the y. m. "I don't think I ever heard of the breed."

"No doubt," rejoined the fair owner, coldly. "He is what you would call a Spitz."

SAME OLD STORY.

You promised to do better
In nineteen-ten;
But the same old grouches
Are at work again.
Yours were good intentions,
That we all know;
Now they'll be used for paving
Down there below.

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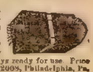

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BOYS'
AND
GIRLS'
CORNER

The Young Fur Takers;

Or, Traps and Trails in the Wilderness

By St. George Rathborne

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Begun in No. 22, May 28. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANSON AND THE BEAR.

THUS a week slipped by. The stock of muskrat furs increased day by day, until it was now an even sixty.

Perhaps this could not keep up much longer, since the rodents were beginning to show signs of more wariness, and on the last day Caleb thought it best to change some of the traps that had not proven profitable, placing them further in the swamp, but always marking the place with a bit of red flannel so that he might not get mixed up, and lose any of his precious traps.

Now he considered it in order to get after Mr. Mink, who had been given ample time to become acquainted with the lovely holes along the bank of the creek, and should be held up for the rent by the landlord.

So in the canoe he set out with traps and everything necessary to lay pitfalls for his confiding tenants.

It took him all morning to get the traps set, and he could hardly wait for the next day to come in order to ascertain whether he had met with a fair measure of success or not; for Caleb did not count himself an experienced hand at this sort of business, and mink are especially difficult to trap, being unusually cautious and wary.

Anson had taken to roaming around with an idea that he might strike the spoor of Caleb's black friend, Mr. Bear; but as yet that pleasure had been denied him. Nor had he seen another chance to knock down a deer, and their supply of venison was getting rather low; but today he had taken lunch with him, also the compass and a larger supply of ammunition than ordinary and had hiked away up the valley determined to ascertain what lay there, and explore new territory.

He could not expect to have much more time to do this, for as the end of October drew closer so would the cold increase; and at any day they might get a foot of snow that would keep them stormbound a while.

Thus it was apt to prove a red letter day for both lads, since the trapper had put out his mink snares with great care, and the hunter was roaming far afield, bent on big game.

After fixing the traps along the creek, Caleb paddled back, left the canoe, snatched a bite or two at the camp, and then set out for the swamp, for his game preserve in that locality needed attention.

There were six muskrats in the toils, which he attended to promptly, and when on the way back, stepping aside to look at the fox trap set in the runway, he was surprised and pleased to find a fine red fellow with a charming brush caught by the forefoot.

Caleb speedily placed him out of pain, and carried him bodily to the camp, so that he could remove the skin at his leisure, for he had never handled a fox, and it required special attention.

Really, it was beginning to look very like a genuine trappers' camp around the old cabin under the whispering pine, with all those furs drying in the air; and the boy was elated at the prospect of accomplishing the task he had set himself—there had been some among his young friends who had sneered at the idea of a green hand expecting to outwit those clever animals who often prove more than a match for veterans; but neither taunts nor jeers had changed Caleb's mind one iota, after he had settled upon his plans.

The afternoon passing away warned him that he had better start upon preparations for the evening meal again, since Anson had probably gone further than he intended, and would therefore be late in coming.

He hoped it was not another case of getting lost; but then that did not seem likely, since he now carried the compass with him all the time, and besides, was much more familiar with the lay of land in the broad valley.

It might be he had struck big game, and was detained getting it in readiness to transport to the camp.

Caleb hoped the last was the case, for they would soon need more meat, unless they began too heavily upon their stock of provisions.

In the gloaming he heard his chum's hallo, which he answered with a blast on the conch, and some twenty minutes later Anson staggered up to the door of the cabin, loaded down with something or other.

No sooner did Caleb set eyes on him than he gave a whoop.

"You got my bear, did you? I hope the skin wasn't badly injured by your old buckshot. Did you see where I hit him that time? Here, let me take it off your back. Ain't he the beauty, though, smooth as velvet, and so warm? We need extra cover, and here it is. Where did you find the old sinner, Ans? Bet he was running yet from fright at my marksmanship. Well, sit down, and make yourself at home. Supper's all ready, and you deserve the best, after that day."

So Caleb rattled on, and his chum answered not a word, for he was utterly out of breath from the terrific exertion of toting that heavy skin, together with a lot of the choice portions of the bear for several miles.

If it hadn't been mostly down-grade Anson would never have made it.

When he had rested a bit, and washed up, supper was laid on the rough but serviceable table, and the two hungry lads fell to.

Of course Anson had to tell how he had come upon tracks of Bruin far above any place he had up to that day visited, and followed them persistently for two hours, when the beast had suddenly started out of the thicket just before him.

He had fired hastily and missed, whereupon the bear had turned in a rage and charged him.

Anson waited, reserving his second barrel until the animal should be almost upon him, for he knew that if he failed to stop Bruin with that he was in for the worst scrape of his life, as a fight with a wounded bear at close quarters, with only a hunting-knife to depend upon, is no child's play.

When within twenty feet of him, seeing that the boy did not run, the animal reared upon his hind feet, and came forward menacingly.

It was very simple after that.

Anson laughed at the guile of the poor creature, in thus opening up a vulnerable spot for the accommodation of the hunter; all he had to do was to aim directly for the heart and pull trigger, when the tragedy was complete.

"I thought for the moment I might have to take to a tree, and I could imagine myself playing all sorts of fancy stunts climbing, with that rascal in full pursuit; but happily it wasn't necessary. He keeled over with a grunt and a few kicks and the game was won. I spent three mortal hours wrestling with that plagued skin, and cutting the brute up so I could handle him—part of the meat I hung in a tree to be fetched tomorrow, and the rest is here," concluded the successful nimrod, proudly.

"Wish I could go after it for you, old h. p. but tomorrow promises to be a very busy day for a fellow about my size, and I'll have to beg off. Suppose you leave it to the next day, and we can go together; I'll take a holiday for once, and let the traps rest a spell," remarked Caleb.

"Done. We don't see any too much of each other, anyway, pard."

"I hope you didn't injure the skin in taking it off. So far as I've seen, it appears to be all right. I'm glad I gave you those lessons the other night when you asked about something or other. It's a dandy, sure enough. My! doesn't it feel soft though. The poor old chap didn't dream he was growing a coat for us this season, did he? Well, where ignorance is bliss it's folly to be wise."

They spent another happy evening chatting and working, each busy at some favorite job that needed attention.

Caleb had discovered the home of a family of otters in the stream, and was now studying all his uncle had written about these interesting little animals, the sleek furs from whose backs bring such good prices in the marts of trade.

"I'd just like to get a few of them before the ice comes, for after that I may have more trouble, lacking the experience. My success with the muskrats makes me think I've got it in me to be a fairly decent trapper of all kinds of varmints; though they do say otter are the slickest things that crawl," he remarked, as he laid a couple of selected traps aside for the morning.

"They look it, I'm bound to say, with a sort of weasel sharpness about them that other animals fail to have, unless it might be the fox," said Anson.

"That reminds me, I didn't show you my windfall of this afternoon," and so he held up the beautiful pelt of the red fox, which as yet he had not stretched.

"Hello! you got a sly old Reynard, eh! Well, all I can say is that you're certainly the boss trapper, Caleb Cushing, and if you don't go to college next year it'll be because the bottom has dropped out of the fur market, and Funston says there never was such a demand for good pelts as this year. Now, if you could only get one of those silver foxes they talk about, that would just about fix you for keeps. Some of them are worth a thousand dollars for a single fur."

"I know it, for I've read about them. The enormous price the skins fetch has induced several parties to try and raise silver foxes in confinement. Reds and grays have been artificially raised without trouble; but no one ever succeeded in getting silver fox young—'cause why? They're a freak, that's all, and even if a pair of silver foxes worth two thousand dollars had a litter of babies the youngsters would be either red or gray—they go right back to the original stock. So a freak they'll be to the end of the chapter, one being found here, and another three hundred miles away, but only a few each season. That's the cause of the thousand dollar mark. No, I hardly think I'll be lucky enough to strike a silver fox up here, though uncle says in his logbook that he caught one about five years before he gave up."

Evidently Anson could not give his chum much information in connection with the habits of animals, for Caleb had studied them all his life, and particularly since conceiving this idea of spending a season among the mountains.

That night was very long to Caleb.

He woke up several times, and found himself wondering whether any of the creek denizens had stepped into the traps he had slyly placed in the mouths of the holes after the most approved method described by Uncle Ab.

Twice he stepped to the door to take a look at the weather, fearful lest it might come up a storm that would prevent him from making the rounds, and thus try his patience still further.

But this did not happen, and the morning broke with a prospect of a fairly decent day ahead, so that after a hasty breakfast he set out for the spot where the first mink trap had been set.

Entering the stream, which was showing a skim of ice in sheltered places, where an eddy kept the current from stirring things up, he moved along carefully and drew near the spot.

That trap had not been sprung, and Caleb naturally felt disappointed, fearing lest after all he lacked the experience and knowledge necessary to outwit the cunning mink; but upon coming to the second spot he found the trap gone, and as he drew the chain in discovered a sleek little animal held by its left hind foot, and, of course, stone dead, having drowned shortly after being caught.

And somehow Caleb felt prouder of his first mink than of the sixty-odd muskrats, the skins of which were being dried in camp—it seemed more royal game.

CHAPTER IX.

NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN DAYS.

By the time Caleb had gone over his entire string and come near the outlet of the swamp he found that he had just six fine mink, and his spirits were soaring very high as a result of his success in trapping this much sought after and cunning animal.

He had good reason to believe that there were many more of the same type to be found along the stream, and from time to time hoped to add to his collection such of their number as he could hoodwink into stepping into his snares.

While in the vicinity he considered it the part of wisdom to visit the other lot of traps in the swamp, and from these took eight muskrats, so that altogether he had his hands full attending to the bunch after arriving at camp, for on this occasion he preferred bringing the game intact, so that Anson might see what a royal collection it was.

"Why, if a fellow only had a month of weather like this he could ask no more the whole season; but I'm afraid we're pretty close to the windup of fall, and winter is ready to pounce down on us in earnest. Several signs told me that today, and while I don't pose as a prophet, watch and see," he remarked, while stretching the mink pelts over the boards very carefully.

"Oh! you bird of evil, croaking in that strain. How do you know but what the season may hold out some weeks yet? Stranger things have happened, and we seem to have luck with us. Never mind, as things go your future seems assured and college within your grasp. But if I know you right you'll keep right on just as if the biggest kind of doubt existed. Now, here goes to try some of that bear. I've been posting myself on how to cook it to bring out the special qualities of the meat, and you might as well get ready for a feast."

It can readily be seen how these two jolly lads entertained each other while in camp, engaged upon their manifold duties; both of them had admirable qualities that wore well under stress, and such royal chaps make the finest of camp-mates.

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There is no place for a pessimist in camp; when the wind blows and the tent has to be held down by all hands for an hour, with the rain pelting each man to the skin, then is the time for the optimist to make light of trouble, and let his merry laugh put fresh heart into the balance of the water-logged crew.

Anson was this kind of fellow, and Caleb, while perhaps a shade less given to joking and merriment, because of the serious problems he had been compelled to face at an early age, nevertheless of a cheery disposition, and could hold up his end in wit and repartee.

The man who could find fault with the meal Ans put upon the table that night would deserve to go hungry the rest of his days.

While it may appear that appetite and the satisfying of the same fill considerable space in a story of the woods, how can it be otherwise, when the ozone of outdoors has such an effect upon the human frame that every one seems hungry all of the time, and the talk is generally "shop"—wherewith shall we be fed?

To the natural man this question of eating is a big thing, and it is no wonder that a couple of growing lads should give it such prominence in their notes of camp life in the wilderness.

Besides the bear steak, juicy, and just cooked enough to taste well, Anson had boiled some sweet potatoes for a treat, and browned them alongside the meat.

Then he had boiled rice, with rich evaporated cream, and sugar for dessert, and a pannikin of Ceylon tea that both boys were very fond of, using coffee during the other meals, or at least for breakfast.

Given an appetite that fairly clamored for attention, and it would seem as if such a bill of fare might prove attractive, especially as there was ample of the food to satisfy their full wants.

How delightful it was to lie back on a blanket, with a head rest, and one's feet to the fire, enjoying the latter to the full, while the wind sang loudly of the cold Northland without, and rushed through pine and helmlock with the noisy bustle of an express train.

Anson puffed away at his pipe as he wrote up his account of the day's doings, and Caleb whittled on new stretching boards.

No doubt the scene would come vividly back to both lads in future years when they had grappled with the problems of the big world, and were engrossed in the business of making names for themselves; and always must it bring a smile of joy, for such reminiscences soften the vigor of commercial or professional activity.

Caleb was, nevertheless, a true prophet on this occasion, for winter did come down upon them in another day, and with a promise of staying.

Then began a new sort of existence, for with the mercury hovering many degrees below the freezing point it was not so pleasant to be handling traps around the water, and especially when the animals to be snared were such as must have access to streams.

But the boy who had started in to get an education was not the one to let anything daunt him, and no matter what the weather he kept up his round of visiting his lines of traps, and attending to the same with fidelity and patience.

As it became more difficult to catch the little varmints of swamp and stream he adopted new tactics, and brought into play a reserve stock of vitality; so that as the days turned into weeks his stock of furs mounted steadily upwards in a manner that was especially gratifying.

As they planned the two lads had gone up the valley on the morning following Anson's adventure with the bear, and carried back all the meat that was worth their attention.

Caleb also enjoyed seeing what the country looked like so far away from camp; for he had been so closely confined to his business that as yet he had found no time for exploration, leaving that to his chum, upon whom devolved the duty of securing a supply of fresh game.

Among other things which Anson had brought along as full of possibilities, were a couple of pairs of snowshoes, which he had purchased from a leading dealer in sporting goods.

Neither of the boys had ever strapped such things to their feet; but they did not anticipate any real trouble, once the conditions for using the same chanced to come about; and with the shoes were full instructions, so that a greenhorn could understand.

Before spring broke the grip of stern winter in these high mountain altitudes there were certain to be times when such articles must prove of great value to those whose duties took them afield; and as Caleb must visit his string of traps on the average of once in three days at least, while his chum wanted to keep on the constant lookout for game as long as a blizzard was not blowing, it can be readily understood how they looked upon the possession of these snowshoes as a bonanza.

Hardly a day passed without something happening that gave them a chance for discussion over the evening meal, or while they sat before the blazing hearth.

Now it was an interesting sight Caleb had seen while making the round of his traps, perhaps connected with the beaver colony, which he was watching with great interest, and the members of which had become quite tame, seeming to realize that this strange biped had no evil intentions toward them; for they even went about their work one day when the boy sat on the bank behind some bushes, but with his presence certainly known.

Again it was Anson who had met with an adventure out of the common, which he related in his droll way, never trying to show himself up in the light of a hero, but rather to the contrary; so that his chum, reading between the lines could get a fair idea as to what the truth might be.

They also met with minor accidents, but nothing serious came to mar the pleasure of their campaign in the woods.

One day Anson declared he believed he had caught a glimpse of a panther.

This seemed so out of the common run that Caleb had him enter into full particulars, even down to describing the color of the beast that had slunk into some dense undergrowth at his approach.

The young nimrod declared it was a pearly gray, just such a color as he had seen many a time in connection with tame panthers, held captive in museums and traveling circus animal cages; and since his description tallied with the genuine article in all particulars, Caleb was forced to admit that it seemed reasonable to believe such a ferocious beast might have come down from further north in search of food.

"If that is the case we're going to see something of the critter before winter's over, I wager," he remarked, in his convincing way.

"I may in my wanderings, and mean to be prepared by having the left barrel of my Marlin holding a buckshot shell for Mr. Panther. If I can get a fair chance I ought to puncture his aspirations; but you hear me right now admitting candidly that I'm not looking for panther. I'd rather he kept his distance. But see here, old chap, you didn't mean me when you said we'd see him sooner or later; d'ye have an idea the beast may try to steal some of our meat, just as Mr. Lynx did?"

"That was what was in my mind," returned Caleb, nodding; "it's a favorite trick on the part of a panther to hang around a camp where they have fresh meat, and make an occasional foray; just as in India his cousin the striped tiger pounces on a stray native and carries him away when hungry. I'm going to set my trap in the hemlock again, and don't be shocked if some night you hear a tin pan tumbling all over the floor here, for that will be the signal that we have an unwelcome visitor."

He was as good as his word; but the days passed and there was no alarm, so that both boys almost forgot the affair, resting in fancied security.

Perhaps this was because game was still fairly plentiful out in the snowy woods, and the panther could make an occasional "kill."

When matters came to a standstill in this particular, and hunger forced him to prowl closer to the abode of the human intruders in his native wilds, it might be they would see something of the gray terror of the pines.

When Anson was not hunting he busied himself cutting wood, for they used a tremendous amount in keeping the cabin warm.

They had hunted out all cracks and crannies where the wind found entrance, and filled them with mud, which, drying, had taken the place of plaster; so that by degrees the old shack had become impervious to draughts, and it was possible to have it very comfortable even on the most bitter night.

December crept on apace, and Christmas found them going about their various duties with unabated zeal, Caleb daily adding more or less to his growing bundles of fine furs, and his chum taking on new symptoms of rugged health; for this sort of open air life was just what Anson had needed to build him up.

Neither of them as yet had found occasion to give one sigh of regret about the course they had mapped out; though naturally there were times when Caleb secretly mourned because he was away from his mother; and he spent many minutes while doing his work wondering how the dear woman was getting on without him, and if all was well in that beloved little cottage in quaint old Tedbury.

CHAPTER X.

OTTER FOR CALEB.

Success had come to Caleb with regard to the otter.

He had discovered a "runway," where they passed from the shore into the water, and taking a No. 2 Newhouse trap had set it at the foot of the "slide," in about four inches of water, staking it out deeper in the stream, so as to drown the victim when caught.

Taking the advice of his uncle, as expounded in his notebook from long experience, Caleb had weighted his trap with an old ax head found about the cabin; for it is reckoned that an otter is exceedingly hard to drown, and apt to get away if ordinary devices that suffice for mink are tried.

Before the stream was covered by an inch of ice he had five other skins to admire, and his chum was loud in his praise of his sagacity.

"You certainly have it in your blood, old fellow. For a greenhorn who never did any trapping to speak of, you beat the band. It does me good just to see how you rake 'em in, that's what," he had declared as Caleb held up the first otter.

"I don't take much credit for it. I rather guess any ordinary fellow could do just as well, providing he had such a great help as I have found in Uncle Ab's diary and notebook. Why, I don't know what I'd have done without it, bless his old heart. How I'd love to see him sitting by our fire here, and enjoying some of your fine cookery. He used to say he never could get the hang of making halfway decent stuff to eat, and was always praising my mother's dishes up to the skies; and she doesn't pretend to be so great a hand either. He was a genial old chap, too, as you can understand after reading his notes. Well, sometimes I try to fancy him watching his nephew carry on business at the old stand, and with a few of the traps he used around here."

If the spirit of the veteran trapper hovered around his old home in the wilderness he must have been gratified at the way Caleb held him in reverence, and frequently blessed his name when success came to his efforts, thanks to the hints he found in that precious diary of Uncle Ab.

During these weeks the boys had, of course, learned many things, and naturally they found their daily tasks work easier with such lack of friction as comes with familiarity.

Anson got up some fairly ravishing dishes, excelling all previous efforts; and his comrade declared this thing of living up in the wilds was the greatest snap a fellow could wish for, when he had a chum along who had been born with a gift for turning the most commonplace dish into such a savory mess that it might fairly tickle the palate of a king.

Of course they had not gone without venison all this while.

Three deer had fallen to their guns, and one of these Caleb had the honor of bringing into camp, a doe that started up in his path one day when he was heading for home, after leaving the swamp.

It always seemed like a miracle to him how he managed to bag that deer, for at the moment he was well loaded down with the fruits of two days' trapping, together with his rifle and several traps he meant to look over by the fire, oiling and fixing the same generally, since he suspected they were not working right.

He must have instinctively dropped his burden like a flash when the doe jumped up before him, and shot away with tremendous bounds, clearing logs and undergrowth with the greatest ease.

Had she gone straight ahead even then he would never have been able to plant a bullet where it would do the most good; such was the small exposure and the speed of the flying animal that a better marksman than Caleb must have missed.

As fate would have it the doe made a sudden turn to the left, and exposed her whole side; whether she imagined she saw some enemy ahead, or an obstacle opposed her further progress in that direction he never knew; but his rifle was already at his shoulder, and with the quick report she fell dead, shot through the heart.

Anson was considerably surprised when he saw the other stagger into camp with a whole deer upon his back, and gladly went over to bring in the traps and bunch of fur-bearing animals from the spot where Caleb had hung them up in a tree.

One day the hunter came in laboring under considerable excitement.

Caleb noticed it at once.

"Met up with Mr. Panther again?" he demanded, immediately, that being the first idea that popped into his head.

"Not any, and you can't guess what I saw today, either. Gave me a weak heart, too, and I've hardly got over it yet," Anson went on.

"Of course I can't guess. Was it a ghost, or something real flesh and blood?"

"About two thousand pounds of it was, I imagine," grinned the hunter, dropping down to rest his weary limbs.

"That's more than one of these little Adirondack bears would weigh by a jugful. What under the sun could you have run across? I wonder if some circus could have lost an elephant now, or a rhinoceros? Give it up, Ans; so take pity on me and tell your little yarn."

"Moose!"

Caleb gave an incredulous snort.

"You're joking. Since when has a moose been seen in these regions? At one time I suppose such animals could be found up here as well as in Maine and Canada, but not for ages. Sure you didn't see some mountain squatter's cow?"

Anson laughed good-naturedly, for it was hard work to get him out of temper.

"If I did I must have imagined a pair of horns that stood up like mountains on his head. He rushed from a thicket like a whirlwind, and I even had to jump to get out of his way. The snow isn't deep yet, and he could go to beat anything. I threw up my gun to fire, but remembering that buckshot would never kill him when he was running away, and not wanting to wound, I held my hand. Perhaps it was a little bit of caution that worked on me, too, for I've always heard that a wounded moose is a terrible foe. Anyhow he went in peace, with a clattering of hoofs and a whirl of snow."

"Well, that was an experience. Think the old chap is alone, and that he means to winter in the valley?" asked Caleb, now convinced that what his chum said was positive truth.

"Why not? He couldn't find a better place. Moose don't generally roam around about by themselves in the winter time. Even the bulls seem to be at peace with each other, keeping their battles for the mating season in spring; and a bunch of them will get together, make a 'yard' by trampling down the snow at some place where they can browse on the moss underneath, and the twigs above, where they will remain until spring comes. I never saw such a place, but I've read about them. Well, I couldn't take my oath on it, but it seemed to me that when this big bull got some distance away he was joined by other dark brown animals, possibly his family. If that is the case we may find their 'yard' later on when the snow gets two feet deep, and have a meat market to go to when our supplies get low. Wouldn't that be delightful, now?"

"For us, yes, for the moose, well, hardly. But that is the law of nature, the survival of the fittest; and if we have a chance to get some moose meat, I for one will make no serious objections. And a mighty pair of horns would just about fill the bill with you, eh, Ans?" remarked Caleb.

Thus it will be seen that whenever Anson went out these days he had a dim suspicion he might run across big game during the day; and this prospect lent a new charm of uncertainty to the labor of tramping over the hills through the snow.

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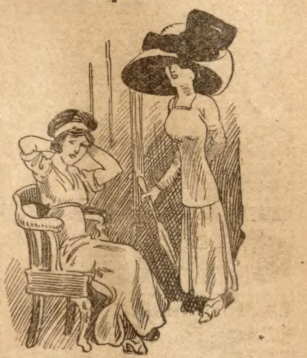

Mrs. Newlywed—My husband admires everything about me; my face, my voice, my eyes, my form, my hands.

Friend—And what do you admire about him?

Mrs. Newlywed—His good taste.

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Does it Flutter, Palpitate or Skip Beats? Have you Shortness of Breath, Tenderness, Numbness or Pain in left side, Dizziness, Fainting Spells, Spots before eyes, Sudden Starting in sleep, Nervousness, Nightmare, Hungry or Weak Spells, Oppressed Feeling in chest, Choking Sensation in throat, Painful to lie on left side, Cold Hands or Feet, Difficult Breathing, Dropsy, Swelling of feet or ankles, or Neuralgia around heart? If you have one or more of the above symptoms, don't fail to use Dr. Kinsman's Celebrated Heart Tablets, the remedy which has made so many marvelous cures. Not a secret or "patent" medicine. One out of four has a weak or diseased heart. Three-fourths of these do not know it, and thousands die who have been wrongfully treated for the Stomach, Lungs, Kidneys or Nerves. Don't drop dead like hundreds of others when Dr. Kinsman's Heart Tablets will cure you.
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Cautionary Note: Be sure you get this stove—see that the name-plate reads "New Perfection."

New Perfection
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It might be he would come in after indulging in such great hopes with nothing to show for his long and wearisome jaunt; or else a brace of partridges that had been so unfortunate as to get within range of his hard-hitting Marlin.

On the whole, though, it was very seldom Anson did not return empty handed, for he had the true hunter instinct, and knew just where to look for the quarry.

Many days went by after his unexpected meeting with the moose, and he did not have another glimpse of the great monarch of the North woods; but all the same he never lost faith in his conviction that sooner or later he was bound to meet up with the giant, and try conclusions with him.

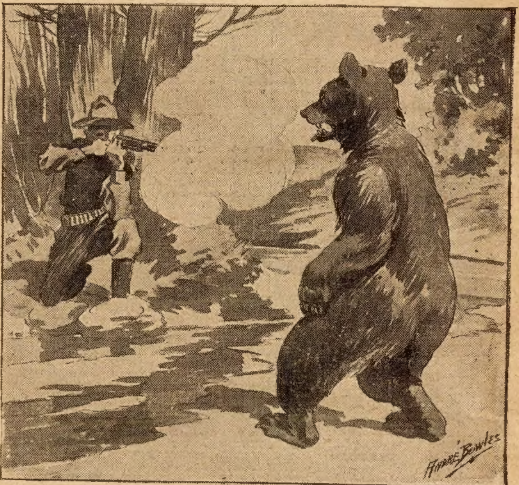
The snow deepened.

It was now knee deep on the level, and Caleb found much difficulty in making the round of his traps.

He had shortened the string considerably, taking up all that seemed to bring in no luck, and thus lightening his labors somewhat; though even then he had a long tramp to make each third day, and when he arrived home it was in a state of complete exhaustion.

There were no more otter, for the present at least, but he hoped to add to his list in the spring, when the little animals would again come out of their deep haunts and make slides on the steep banks.

The muskrats were still coming in, and he had a fine big bundle of furs that must represent quite a sum of money; and mink had not ceased to enter his traps, though, owing to the severe state of the weather he could not count on getting even one each day.



"It was very simple after that."

It finally came about that the boys were compelled to adapt themselves to the novelty of walking on snowshoes, for the drifts were so bad that sometimes it seemed impossible to get through them.

Snowshoeing is fine work when the conditions are just right, and that is when fellows who walk for pleasure take their outings; but if one has to go out, no matter what the conditions, it often proves hard sledding, though possible when ordinary walking is out of the question.

When a slight thaw has taken place in the daytime, and the melting snow freezes with a crust on top—that is the ideal time for snowshoeing, since it is possible to skate over the surface of drift and level at a remarkably fast speed.

The boys soon came to understand the working principles of their new gear, and both declared after the first day's experience that they did not feel one-half so fatigued as when trying to get around by floundering in the soft snow.

Of course they had accidents, and sometimes a bit serious, as for instance on the occasion of Anson toppling over into a drift, where he went down head first, with his feet sticking out, always a precarious situation, very much after that of the silly who tied a life preserver to his feet and then jumped overboard.

It took Anson a good half-hour to get righted, and taught him a lesson that he was not likely to forget, since he might have lost his life there in the lonely woods, far from camp.

January was creeping along and all seemed well.

Half of their stay in the wilderness had been accomplished, and as they surveyed the results of their campaign both boys enthusiastically voted it a huge success, both from a financial standpoint and with regard to added health; for Anson declared he felt that he had taken on a new lease of life, and would not entertain any future worry over the state of his lungs.

What more could they ask?

They had learned a thousand things in connection with the denizens of the wilds, that they would never have known only for this scheme of getting close to Nature; and thus far not the slightest reason for regrets had cropped up.

CHAPTER XI.

AN UNWELCOME GUEST BUTTS IN.

It was about this time, when the days were bitter cold, and the nights doubly so, that something occurred to break in upon the monotony of their regular tasks.

Caleb was of a very pertinacious nature, and though he seldom mentioned the matter he never wholly relaxed his vigilance with regard to the expected coming of the panther.

Once Anson reported that he had heard a strange series of cries off in the thickest part of the woods where he was ranging, and suspecting that these might spring from his friend of the gray jacket, he declined to investigate, since, as he wisely remarked, he could not recall having lost any panther at that time. Later on he believed he also caught a loud purring sound, such as a big cat might make, and the idea that he was close to the hungry beast caused him to quicken his steps, and keep his finger on the triggers of his gun, ready to pour in a volley at the first appearance of the prowler.

But nothing had followed, and he breathed easier when the woods grew more open, so that he could see some distance around him, and be prepared for an attack.

Anson was drying some of their surplus venison, by hanging it in the wide-throated chimney, where the fumes of the hard wood would carry out his idea, and give sweetness to the meat.

That was what brought about a strange adventure.

The night was not quite so cold as usual; but Caleb, chancing to awaken along about two or three o'clock was thinking of crawling out of his bunk and throwing some more fuel on the fire, which had died down to a few red coals, when, without the slightest warning, there was a furious scratching close by, followed by a loud screech, and a heavy thud.

"What's that?" shouted Anson, starting to jump up.

"Get back into your bunk instantly!" cried Caleb, using one of his hands to push his chum over; "some sort of animal has come down the chimney!"

"Gracious! are you sure?" ejaculated the other, in abject amazement, for he had never heard of such a strange thing.

"I just had a glimpse of it scratching through the ashes yonder. You can see how they are scattered. And while the light is mighty dim I fancy I can just discover some sort of object crouching over yonder at the door," returned Caleb.

The picture must have been a startling one, with the two boys poking their heads out of their bunks, and Caleb pointing to the spot where he saw "something queer."

"Say, do you think your prophecy has come true, and it's that blessed old panther come to pay us a visit?" demanded Anson, with tense breath.

"Wouldn't wonder a bit. He was after that meat you hung in the chimney. So you see you're to blame, and not the trap I set outside a while back. Say, isn't your gun in this corner here by me?"

"Yes, as sure as you live it is. For mercy's sake go slow, and don't provoke him to attack you. I don't want to muss up my bunk by a bloody fight. Have you reached the gun, Cale?"

"I have it. Now try to remember, what have you got in the barrels?"

"Just as usual, shot in the right, buckshot in the left. I never alter that combination except when I put in both shells of buck. Depend on it that's right," said Anson, positively.

"Take your word for it. Now, you have matches in your pocket, for you never go without—reach around and get one. Tell me when you're ready, and I'll give the word to strike. This has got to be a sure thing or there'll be trouble."

"Say, Cale, are your hands steady? If not, better let me try it?" whispered Anson.

"Steady as a rock, never fear. You do your part, and I'll promise mine. Listen, was that a growl?"

"Sure thing. The beast is getting over his fright at coming down into the fire, and his ugly temper is showing again. There, listen to him purr. That's a queer freak, now. Thought cats only purred when contented. Thinks he's got us in a tight hole, maybe. Now, old man, be sure. I've got my pistol gripped, but it's poor going against a beast like that at close quarters. Tell me when!"

Caleb had both hammers of the little twelve-bore Marlin raised, and as well as he could he settled down to take aim at the object up against the door.

"Are you ready?" he asked, his voice just as calm as if he stood before the traps, and with clay pigeons to soar to the right and left.

"Ready," answered Anson.

"Then pull!"

There was a scratching sound, and immediately the match burst into a flame.

What the two lads saw was not a very cheerful sight.

Down there on the floor by the door a large gray animal crouched, with a square head laid between his paws, and his tail switching to and fro with spasmodic jerks.

There was no time to see anything more.

for Caleb had an instinctive idea that the panther, angered by its burns in falling into the hot embers of the fire, and believing these human beings were responsible for its suffering; was about to spring, since his glowing eyes were fastened upon the bunks, and his ears had flattened against his head in an aggressive manner.

Then Caleb pressed the trigger, and the bang of the gun sounded like a clap of thunder in the confined space of the cabin.

Anson had other matches in his hand, and he deliberately thrust several at once into the blaze of the one he had just struck, so that there was no lack of illumination.

The animal was blown completely over by the discharge at close quarters, and rolled about upon the floor in its death agonies, Caleb following each and every little movement with the Marlin, evidently quite ready to give him the right barrel the very second he showed any disposition to struggle to an upright posture.

A second dose was not needed however, for the buckshot had gone like a huge bullet, having no chance to separate at such short range, and the animal was giving his last kick when Anson jumped out upon the floor, lighted a candle, and then hustled some fine kindling upon the hearth, to which he applied a match.

The boys dressed in a hurry, for there could be no more sleep that night.

Both were shivering now, perhaps from cold, but more than likely from the after-effect of the excitement; though neither had trembled at the time the danger seemed greatest.

Upon examining the panther they found that he was a big fellow, and with claws that made them shudder as they saw them; he had undoubtedly been attracted to the wide-throated chimney by the tantalizing odor of smoked bear meat and venison, and as he in his hunger endeavored to reach the same, he had fallen in, with the result of giving the two lads the scare of their lives.

Still, they thought they could afford to forgive the gray rascal, as they considered that they had the best of the bargain, since the poor chap had paid the penalty for his rashness with his life.

"There's only one thing I regret," sighed Caleb, disconsolately, as he looked at the big brute, and stroked the soft fur with his hand.

"I can bet I know what it is—you're grieving now because you just had to go and spoil a fine skin to save our lives. George you're the worst I ever knew. Anyhow, the pelt's all right, for you only struck him in the head," exclaimed Anson, with mock disgust.

"Yes, but it would have been much handsomer with the head intact. However, don't think I'm ungrateful, old chap, because I believe we've had the narrowest escape of our lives. If those poisonous claws had dug into our flesh you'd have use for that little phial of medicine you brought along, and which you said is used in India when a man is clawed by a tiger. Well, in the morning I'll have the pleasure of relieving our friend and guest of his nice coat, which I imagine he does not need any longer. It will add variety to my collection. Say, won't the eyes of those croakers in Tedbury, who predicted all sorts of dismal failures for our expedition, stick out when they see me unroll those precious old bundles of fur? If it keeps on I'll have enough for my college year, and perhaps a surplus to make mother a dandy fur coat in the bargain. She'll be proud to wear one that is made of skins her boy took from the wilds."

"I should say she would, and I'm to have the pleasure of getting it made for her—don't say a word on that score, now, it's settled for keeps. What time is it anyway? Going back to bed?"

"We'd better, for it isn't three; but I can't sleep a wink I know."

They lay there talking until it was time to get up and start in on the many duties of the day.

Of course Caleb was proud of the panther pelt when it was dried and ready for packing; and he took especial pains to see that it kept soft and pliable, for some day he expected to have that same as a rug on the floor of his room at college, as he had heard of the other boys doing, only in their case money supplied the same, and not their own ability as nimrods.

Anson boasted some of the success of his panther trap, but it was noticed that he took the smoked meat out of the chimney that very next day, and when Caleb came to examine the flue later he found that there had been a nice stout bar placed in such a manner that no animal might after that get even his head into the opening above.

Evidently Anson did not hanker after a repetition of his experience; and surely he could not be blamed for such caution, for it was a terrible thing to be so suddenly aroused from sound sleep and learn that a ferocious beast had entered through the chimney, and was even then crouching on the floor, growling with rage, and ready to spring upon the aroused sleepers.

No doubt Ans did the subject full justice in his memoirs of the trip, and gave his chum all the praise he deserved for his plucky shot.

They had brought books along with them, and at times when snow-bound found an opportunity to pore over these; they were not trashy novels but books pertaining to things in which the boys were deeply interested, so that they were stocking their minds with information the while.

Both now found themselves looking forward with increasing interest to the wind-up of winter, and the breaking of spring, still a good way off.

No matter how pleasantly situated a couple may be when thus alone, there must come a time when something within them clamors for new scenes, and contact with their fellows.

Caleb never faltered in his work.

He took his toll of the muskrat colonies in that swamp as though it might be the one main object of his life, as indeed it was just then, and never seemed to tire of preparing the skins; and yet he knew that he would never be happy as a trapper, for there were larger and greater vocations calling to him from the outside world, and he must heed the summons—this was all very good as a means to an end, but with this one season his work as a curer of furs would likely come to its finis.

It was about the tenth of February when Anson came back one afternoon with great news that created quite a ripple in the camp, and caused Caleb to postpone the regular visit he meant to take among his traps the following day.

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this story of boyhood adventures. You will miss a great treat if you do not read it to the end. We will give constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

JIMMY'S DILEMMA.

At the Reid house there was great excitement and bustle of preparation. People came and went; the telephone bell buzzed madly; the grocer was at the back door; the florist at the side door; in the kitchen two neighbors who had come in to help were icing cake and cracking nuts; in the parlor there was a litter of potted plants and ribbon; upstairs in the best chamber a flock of girls were chattering over the opening of a great box that had just been sent in from the dressmaker's. All the house smelled of coffee and carnations, of roses and chicken.

The reason for all this was that Ada Reid was to be married that evening. She had come from the city where she had been employed for three years with a new diamond ring and a trunkful of new clothes, and a noticeable air of importance.

During the two weeks since, there had been a constant flurry of coming and going, chattering and laughter. Ada was a center of admiration and interest. She had been showered and feted and feasted to weariness.

But now there was a fresh thrill, for the carriage had been sent to the station to meet the bridegroom and his best man, who were scheduled to arrive by the 5 o'clock express from the city.

Jimmy Reid, Ada's elder and only brother, wearing a very uncomfortable collar and a new tie, was standing about helplessly, feeling very much in the way and miserably conscious that he was too big to stand in the corner.

He was a tall young fellow, with a dark, sober face that was at once proud and shy and sensitive. He was a silent soul, with a large opinion of all things human, save himself.

If he had placed the proper estimate upon his own mental and physical excellence he would long ago have spoken his mind to little Julia Carr, who was his sister's dearest friend, and with whom he had been in love since his earliest boyhood.

Julia was there now, flitting about the house upon innumerable little errands of a prospective bridesmaid. Once in a while she threw him a glance or pushed him aside as she passed. Even these crumbs of her favor were better than none, and Jimmy, patiently adoring, was glad to be able to watch her as she came and went before him.

From kitchen to parlor he roamed in a sorry state of restlessness and inaptitude. In the parlor at length he came to a halt, regarding dazedly the construction of the floral arch underneath which the ceremony was to be performed.

He had done most of the work upon it under Julia's direction, and she had been a most difficult taskmistress. Never had his fingers seemed so clumsy or his wits so slow. Yet the thing did look pretty now that it was done.

With a pang of jealousy Jimmy thought of the best man who was to stand with Julia under that arch and share the honors of the occasion. Ada had had so much to say in praise of him and of her betrothed—how elegant they were, how faultless in manner. Poor Jimmy, listening, was made to feel "backwoodsy" and objectionable.

Girls liked handsome, stylish men. Ada had chosen one. He felt despairingly that she was inclined to make a match between the best man and Julia, when of course, she must know the state of his feelings in regard to the girl.

How could he stand back and see Julia step under this arch with that man—a handsome man whom she would probably be ready to fall in love with. The arch danced mockingly before his eyes. Then a bright little voice recalled him to his senses.

"Jimmy! Jimmy!" It was Julia, running downstairs, a radiant figure in her thin pink dress. "Jimmy, that package hasn't come from Cramer's yet, though I've 'phoned and 'phoned. We must have it. It's something very special. You go this minute and get it. And blow the Chambers up properly!"

Jimmy stood feasting his hungry eyes upon the charm of her face. She seized his arm and gave him a shake.

"Stupid! Do you hear? Now go and do try to get back before your father returns from the station with those men. You'll have to run."

Jimmy ran. It was some distance to Cramer's. As he hurried he glanced at his watch. In the far distance he heard the arriving train whistle. There was no use in killing himself trying to get back to the house before those men reached there, and at any rate if he did not he would be spared the misery of seeing Julia introduced to them.

He reached Cramer's in a rather breathless condition, nevertheless, to find that the package had been sent by a messenger—must have reached the house about the time he left it.

He lagged home drearily. As he approached the house he heard a gale of laughter and conversation. His natural diffidence overcame him and he sneaked around to the back door, intending to escape quietly to his room. But, alas, his Aunt Maria stood there with her glasses on, scrutinizing a dish of icing that did not seem to be hardening as rapidly as it should.

"Where have you been?" she inquired, and bounced upon him. "What's become of your manners? Come with me into the parlor."

She took him into the parlor. There was a lull in the hilarity upon their joint entrance. The parlor was full of people. He felt Julia's disdainful eyes upon him as she turned her attention for one instant from the best man, with whom she was conversing in her sprightliest manner.

Yes, he was handsome. Poor Jimmy saw that. And he seemed to have at once singled Julia out for his special favor. In that terrible moment wherein he realized these things, Jimmy could think of nothing more desirable than to drop dead at the feet of his cruel love.

But, instead of dropping dead, he lived, apparently with composure and success. For he accepted his introductions creditably, said as much as was necessary, and even managed to smile once or twice. But he was glad when the early dinner was announced, even though the best man led Julia to the table.

It was a good dinner. Aunt Maria had seen to that. But it was eaten hurriedly—there was so little time until 8 o'clock. Afterward every one ran off to dress.

Jimmy had new clothes, but he donned them without enthusiasm. What did it matter how well he looked when the best man would look so much better?

After a long time—Jimmy never knew how long or how he got there—he found himself in the front parlor with Aunt Maria and his father and mother staring at a distant doorway, while the notes of the wedding march throbbed in ecstatic anticipation. There was a premonitory rustle, a long-drawn breath and—they were coming.

Every eye turned to the bride, a fairy figure appropriately garbed in satin and veiled in tulle, but Jimmy saw only Julia. Her eyes were downcast, her cheeks as pink as the great shower bouquet drooping from her meek little hands. Something caught in his throat and threatened to choke him. As in a dream he heard the old minister mumbling the words of the marriage service—saw the ring put on—then it was all over and everybody was laughing and talking all at once. Getting married was not such a terrible ordeal after all.

In the dinningroom a little later Jimmy sat among the others, staring, while his sister tremulously slashed at a big cake very white on the outside and very black within. Toasts were drunk and a great many nice things said. Then Ada was whisked away upstairs to don her going-away gown.

When she came down everybody was waiting on the porch or in the hall. There were concealed bags of rice, surreptitious old shoes to be flung for good luck. There was a great deal of handshaking and kissing and some tears, a swift departure attended by great commotion, the slamming of a carriage door, and there was Jimmy alone in the darkness of the side piazza blowing his nose very hard and trying to imagine what it would be like to carry off Julia as his sister was just then being carried off.

When a fellow feels like that, of course, there is nothing to do but light a cigar and smoke it, if he can be left in peace long enough. Jimmy struck the match and as the light flared up he saw a thing of pinkness and ineffable fragrance and radiance close beside him.

"Jimmy," said that dearest voice in the world, "what are you doing way off here by yourself?"

Jimmy started and dropped the match! Right upon her chiffon skirt. She gave a little cry and stood perfectly still while he grasped at the spark which threatened to become a dangerous flame and extinguished it. It was an excruciating moment for him, but Julia laughed.

"Suppose you had burned me up!" she said.

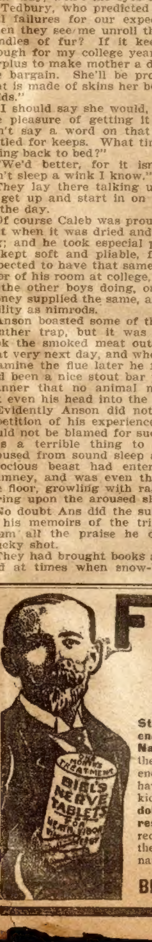
"Oh, Julia!" he gasped. "I'm just a clumsy, careless brute! I don't wonder you don't like me."

"But—but I do like you, she admitted. "I like you very much, Jimmy—dear."

"Oh, Julia!" he gasped again. And then somehow, because she was so near and did not seem exactly unwilling, he put his arms about her. "I love you, darling," he breathed against her cheek.

"Now, isn't that funny?" she whispered. "I love you, too."

Some men manage to get along nicely by paying compliments instead of debts.



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For Youthful Eyes

GHOSTS AT NIGHT.

"Father saw it night before last. I heard him tell ma about it," said Jack Henry, as he and his chum, Tom Lowry, sunned themselves on a log at the wood pile.

"What did it look like?" questioned Tom.

"A tremendous white dog."

"I say, that's great!" laughed Tom, "I'd like to know how you can tell one white dog from another. There are a thousand or less roaming around the country. The idea that the whole neighborhood should be scared over a dog!"

"Well, you see," replied Jack Henry, "this isn't a common dog. It's just as a ghost dog ought to be. It's never seen in the daytime."

"How do you know it isn't? I saw a big white dog myself the other day."

"But this dog hasn't any head. There it runs, night after night, over by Pine Tree Ledge. Father says that a good many years ago a man was riding along there, when another man came and rode by him. All at once the first man went pitching over the cliff like a sack of salt. The other man rode right along, down the path. Pretty soon the first man's dog—a big white one—ran up to his horse and bit his leg. Then the man jumped off the horse, and kicked the dog over the ledge, too. He mounted again and away he went. No one knew anything about it until the next morning when a boy told it. He was out late the night before because his mother was sick, and he saw the man coming along the path. He said his hair stood straight up on his head when he saw the man go over. Well, after a long time they found out it was a crazy man that rode away. They never found the bodies, and some people said the boy must have dreamed it all."

"Of course he did! I don't believe in the 'haunts' you folks here are so foolish over."

"Yes, I know how wise and brave you'd be," sneered Jack Henry, "if you should run up against a great big dog looking right at you without a sign of a head to him!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Tom. "I wonder where he'd keep his eyes! One thing certain—if he didn't have any head he couldn't bite me, even if he could see me."

"Well, anyhow," persisted Jack Henry, "you might as well be bitten as scared to death."

"I'm going to try my level best to get a look at his lordship," declared Tom.

"Oh, Tom!" gasped Jack, you would never dare!"

"Indeed, I would, then! Father and mother have told me ever since I can remember that there are no such things as ghosts, and when folks think they see one, if they'd follow it up they'd find it is just some common, natural thing; and I believe that's what I'll find in this."

"There are plenty of men who have seen it and been scared half to death over it," answered Jack.

"Why didn't they shoot it?" asked Tom.

"Some of them were afraid to, but one man did, and he said there was nothing but empty space when the bullet reached the spot. The dog didn't seem to move, but just disappeared."

"Bosh!" said Tom. "It jumped down the bank, of course. I'll cook up a plan to get that creature, and show you what he is."

"Go it, then!" cried Jack Henry, admiring his friend's bravery. "Say," he added, suddenly, "if you can do it, there's something in it for you, because I heard Squire Gray say he would give five dollars to the person that would unravel the mystery."

"Whew!" whistled Tom, "that settles it. That's the sum I've been wishing for to get a good camera."

Tom decided to make a confidant of his father, who encouraged him to carry out his plan. He made a careful examination of Pine Tree Ledge in the daytime, and though he did not see the frightful beast he was apparently convinced that there was "ground for suspicion," for the next day he carried some good strong cord to the spot and proceeded in this wise:

Bending down a strong sapling he tied one end of the cord to it; then after tying a small stick—called the "key"—about two inches long, on the cord eighteen inches from where it was attached to the sapling, he drove a pronged stick into the ground and some shorter ones (about three inches high), making a circle of them about eighteen inches in diameter. The next move was to make a slip noose on the loose end of the cord and lay it on the ground around the outside of the circle of sticks. Then, taking another stick sixteen inches long, he placed one end at the top of the pronged stick and fastened it in place with the "key," leaving the other end free and four inches from the ground inside the circle.

"Now, my fine fellow!" he exclaimed, when he had finished, "you just come trotting along here and happen to put your foot on that trigger, and what a surprised dog you will be when the slip noose is released and some portion of your anatomy goes swinging in the air."

The next morning while Jack Henry was taking his "final snooze," as he expressed it, he was awakened by Tom's excited call at his window.

"I say, Jack Henry, come out here quick! I've got something to tell you!"

"All right," responded Jack, hurrying into his clothes.

"I've caught the ghost!" explained Tom mysteriously, when Jack appeared.

"What? Where?" demanded Jack Henry looking apprehensively about.

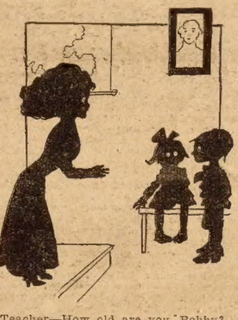
"Don't be frightened little boy; he's fast, all right, and he's howling too," said Tom. "I came by the squire's and invited him to come with us to be sure of the proof. He said he'd take my word for it—it was too early and too cold for him. But he told me to hold it tight, because he'd like to see it later. Pa's going to meet us at the Ledge. He stopped to build the breakfast fire."

Before they reached the Ledge, they saw, caught fast by one hind leg in the "snare" a huge, tough, gaunt-looking dog, whose entire body and neck were pure white, while his head was coal black.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Jack Henry, "no wonder people couldn't see that dog had a head—in the dark. I think I'll never be frightened at 'say so's' after this. But say, Tom, if he had happened to put his front foot in that noose he could have gnawed the rope."

"Yes," said Tom, "but you see luck was for me that time. He couldn't reach that hind leg."

His Age.



Teacher—How old are you, Bobby?
Bobby—Aw, maw says I'm too young to eat the things I like, and too old to cry when I don't get them."

POLLY TALK.

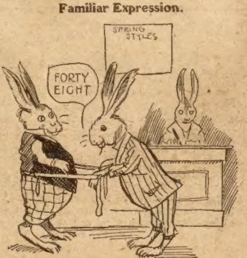
I have a parrot,
Her name is Poll,
And all she can say is Fol de rol,
But grandma says this
Is not much amiss,
For some folks talk and say nothing at all.

No Choice.

"Your pa and ma aren't real parents. They adopted you."

"Well, that's better than you. My parents picked me out, and yours had to take you as you came."

Familiar Expression.

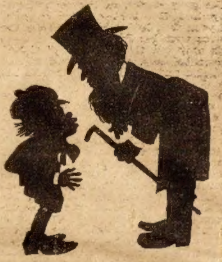


A hare's breadth.

THE SQUABBLE BIRD.

Have you ever heard of the Squabble Bird,
Who comes when you mean to be good?
He makes a noise like a thousand boys,
Every one in an unpleasant mood.
Did you ever hear—with quaking fear
Of your mother or father or aunt—
A noise in the room like cannons aboom
Which you try hard to stop, though you can't?
Let us try as we may to be nice in our play,
That Squabble Bird flies in the game.
It is he that is cross, and he tries to be boss,
So how are we children to blame?
The ugly bird tries to make trouble; he flies
Out and ruffles my temper up so
I scarcely know how I get into a row,
But the bird seems to dodge every blow.
I do not know where is the Squabble Bird's lair,
But his nest seems to be in my bed.
He wakes when I wake, all without the least shake.
Mamma says he on anger is fed.
She says, too, he knows me from head to my toes,
That he makes me quarrel with Ted,
And from first break of day till the sun goes away,
Old Squabble puts fight in my head.
Some night very soon by the light of the moon
I'll search this mean Squabble Bird out;
I will cut him in three so he can't bother me
And we'll have no more such squabbling about.

The Reason.



Man—You say your mamma whipped you? Never mind, sonny.
Boy—I don't, mister, and that's why she whipped me.

Out of the Mouths of Babes.

Father—Now, Johnny, you must go to bed. "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise," you know.

Little Johnny—Then why didn't you go to bed early when you was a boy, papa?

—

Tommy (aged 6)—Teacher, may I study 'rithmetic?

Teacher—No, you are too young.

Tommy—But I want to, teacher.

Teacher—Why are you so anxious to study arithmetic, Tommy?

Tommy—So I can learn how to keep a baseball score.

—

Small Edgar's mother had invited a few friends to tea and the little fellow was warned to be on his best behavior. The conversation having become quite animated at the table, Edgar was forgotten. A few moments later his mother asked the servant for a clean plate, when Edgar said: "You can have mine, mamma; there ain't nothin' on it."

—

"Now, my dear," said the teacher of the juvenile grammar class, addressing a bright miss, "correct the sentence 'Chicago lays at the side of Lake Michigan.'"

"Lake Michigan lays at the side of Chicago," was the prompt reply.

Odd Things in Postoffices.

"One of the striking things in Boston," said a New York woman, according to the New York Sun, "is the courtesy of the main postoffice corridor attaches. I had occasion to address an envelope at one of the corridor stands.

"'Shall I put a new pen in for you?' I heard a gentle voice at my elbow say.

"I looked around and saw a roly poly man with a gray mustache with a box of pens in his hand.

"'I use up nearly three boxes a day,' he said as he inserted a pen in the holder; 'folks spoil them by jamming them into the blotter. This is the best pen we have and I think you will like it. It is really too good for this place, for it wouldn't last five minutes in some people's hands.'

"He showed a second box.

"'These long pens I sort of keep for the old ladies,' he said, 'they are very fond of them. They come begging me for them.'

"He laid a second pen on the desk.

"'You might take this along with you,' he said. 'I've got to lay them out anyway.' Then he bowed and was gone."

SPRINGTIME.

When the sun shines in the sky,
And the birdlings flutter by,
And light upon the lofty trees,
And flit about, quite at ease;
When you feel the sweet wind blow,
That's the time the seeds to sow,
For you know it's spring, sweet spring.

About all experience seems to teach some people is the fool notion that they can do it again without getting hurt.